Engendering Antiquity: Masculinity and Ancient Rome in the Victorian Cultural Imagination

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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September 2014

Abstract

This thesis examines nineteenth-century receptions of ancient Rome, with a specific focus on how those receptions were deployed to create useable models of masculinity. I suggest that Rome represents a contested space in the Victorian cultural imagination, with an array of possible scripts and narratives that could be harnessed to articulate masculine ideals, or to vilify perceived deviance from those ideals. Thus, this thesis presents a model of nineteenth-century manliness wherein masculine dominance is derived from the perceived authority to assign meaning to Rome as an image, and to determine its usage either as a badge of merit or a condemnation of certain gendered traits.

After establishing in the opening chapter the centrality of Latin and a classical education to elite male identities at both individual and collective levels, the remainder of this thesis charts the place and function of the Roman parallel in the construction of several key 'styles' of nineteenth-century masculinity, from the man of letters and the industrialist, to the New Imperialist and the dandy. In this way I account for the multifarious and often contradictory treatments of the Roman example in Victorian literature where, for instance, the same Roman parallel was used to capture the martial virtue of Wellington as was used to condemn the deviance and degeneracy of Oscar Wilde. Understood through the lens of masculine identity, Victorian receptions of Rome become more comprehensible: Rome is contested because masculinity is contested; there are many competing visions of Rome because there are many competing styles of masculinity. Far from attempting to artificially homogenize or to impose a singular narrative of Victorian reception, the aim of this thesis is to explore its complexity and to explain its central conflict as a struggle over the codification of manliness whereby the cultural authority to assign meaning to the Roman age is equivalent to and indicative of the power to speak authoritatively about masculinity in the present.

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Acknowledgements

This thesis has benefitted from the input and expertise of three supervisors. First and foremost, I am grateful to Rhian Williams for her unwavering kindness and guidance over the past four years, for her willingness to let me find my own way with this thesis, and for her patience and reassurance when I (inevitably) wandered off down various cul-de-sacs and dead-ends. My thanks also to my secondary supervisors, Christine Ferguson and Justin Livingstone, for being so generous with their time and advice in the later stages of this project, and to Andrew Radford and Matthew Creasy, who read early iterations of these chapters, and whose feedback has been very much appreciated. I would like to acknowledge the generosity of the English and Classics departments at the University of Glasgow for the opportunities they have afforded me to learn, and also to teach, and for being such great places to study. This thesis was made possible by a grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, for which I am most grateful.

Thanks to my ever-reliable friends, without whom this process would not have been nearly so enjoyable: to Hannah Tweed, proof-reader and speed-reader extraordinaire, baker of banana bread, disseminator of much good-natured mockery and sound advice; to Sarah Bissell, whose book recommendations have been, without exception, invaluable to this thesis; and to the Glasgow University Nineteenth Century Reading Group, for much laughter and many coffees.

As always my most heartfelt thanks go to my parents, Helen and David, to whom I owe far more love and gratitude than I have words or space to express here; to Shirley and Jimmy – the best grandparents and most willing readers anyone could ask for; and to my brother, Phillip, who remains to this day the only person who can decipher my academic shorthand. Finally, love and thanks to my partner, Douglas Small, who knows all the reasons why – thank you for everything.

Introduction
Roma and Victoria

> We have lived in a period rich in historical lessons beyond all former example; we have witnessed one of the great seasons of movement in the life of mankind, in which the arts of peace and war, political parties and principles, philosophy and religion, in all their manifold forms and influences, have been developed with an extraordinary force and freedom. Our own experience has thus thrown a bright light upon the remoter past…
>
> - Thomas Arnold, *History of Rome* (1838)[1]

By thus introducing his *History of Rome*, Thomas Arnold captured early Victorian optimism about the spirit of his own age, characterizing what he felt was the privileged insight of the Victorian male into the ancient Roman world. 'Much which our fathers could not fully understand, from being accustomed only to quieter times' he writes, 'is to us perfectly familiar.'[2] A great empirical, imperial, utilitarian present provided both an impetus, and a lens through which to view the ancient past. And Arnold was not alone in celebrating what Peter Allan Dale calls the 'nineteenth-century phenomenon of historical-mindedness.'[3] In 1842, John Stuart Mill noted that: 'The idea of comparing one's own age with former ages, or with our notion of those which are yet to come, had occurred to philosophers; but it never before was the dominant idea of any age.'[4] Mill's words capture what seems an extraordinary awareness of the inherent self-reflexivity which governs any encounter with a text or artifact from the past. As Gadamer writes: 'to understand what a

[1] Thomas Arnold, *History of Rome*, 3 vols. (London: B. Fellowes et al., 1845), I:vi-vii.
[2] Arnold, *History of Rome*, p.vii.
[3] Peter Allan Dale, *The Victorian Critic and the Idea of History* (London: Harvard University Press, 1977), p.3.
[4] John Stuart Mill, 'The Spirit of the Age', *Examiner*, 9 January, 1831, pp.20-21 (p.20).

work of art says to us is […] a self-encounter.'[5] In short, the Victorian age was preoccupied with what we now call issues of reception.

In April 1967, Hans Robert Jauss coined the term 'Rezeptionsästhetik' to describe a new model of reading which 'would acknowledge the historicity of texts, but also allow for the aesthetic response of readers in the present (any present of reading).'[6] Reception theory ultimately shifts the primary site of meaning in any text from the author to the reader, who approaches a text with unique and innumerable experiences, attitudes, ideologies, languages, and intertextual networks which will result in their privileging certain readings over others. Jauss's work was followed and expanded upon by Wolfgang Iser, I.A.Richards, and Stanley Fish among others, but it has been in the field of classics where reception has been employed most widely as a means of engaging with ancient texts in ways that acknowledge, rather than attempting to collapse or overcome, the temporal distance and differences in language, social institutions, and belief systems between ancient authors and modern readers.[7] Edited collections on classical receptions in recent years have included Charles Martindale's *Classics and the Uses of Reception* (2006), Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray's *Companion to Classical Receptions* (2008), and the ongoing *Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature* (2012-), which, taken together, emphasize the vastness of a field that includes an infinite number of contexts in which one can set a work in order to understand its tradition or significance in a particular historical moment. How one responds to and utilizes a past like ancient Rome, then, constitutes a reflection not only on the spirit of the age – for the purposes of this thesis, the Victorian age – but, potentially, on the nature, values and ideologies of the individual.

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[5] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics,* trans. by David R. Linge (London: University of California, 1976), p.101.

[6] Charles Martindale, 'Thinking Through Reception', in *Classics and the Uses of Reception* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp.1-13 (p.3); see Syndy McMillen Conger, 'Hans Robert Jauss's "Rezeptionsästhetik" and England's Reception of Eighteenth-Century German Literature', *Eighteenth Century,* 22 (1981), pp.74-93 for more on Jauss's theory of reception.

[7] See especially Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (London: Routledge, 1976); and Stanley Fish's chapter on 'Interpreting the Variorum', in *Is There a Text in This Class?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp.147-174 for more on critical expansions of Jauss's theory of reception.

Rosemary Jann has demonstrated how the development of scientific and evidence-based methodologies in the nineteenth century catalyzed a tension between the competing demands of reason and imagination in Victorian history writing.[8] Yet so too are these tensions played out as conflicts between men of letters and the public sphere they shaped. Thomas Carlyle, for instance, retained aspects of a Romantic, non-materialist approach in *On Heroes and Hero Worship and the Heroic in History* (1841) and in *Past and Present* (1843) at a time when such ideals were swiftly falling out of fashion in a determinedly modern, industrial society. The consequence of this, as one reviewer of Thomas Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome* (1842) put it, was a feeling among many of his contemporaries that: 'but for the love we bear him, we should have lost our temper with Thomas Carlyle'.[9] By contrast the reviewer, like Macaulay himself, uses the *Lays* to share in the enthusiasm of Mill and Arnold for the modernity of the Victorian present, and the civic and intellectual virtues of its male representative. Mill framed his own indictment of Carlyle and other philosophers who rejected a materialist view of progress, as an issue of modern manliness. 'Mankind', he writes, 'are then divided, into those who are still what they were and those who have changed: into men of the present age and men of the past. To the former, the spirit of the age is a subject of exultation; to the latter, of terror'.[10] His remarks are typical of the implicit value judgements about Victorian masculinity which are encoded into this type of historiographical discourse, and which are nowhere more hotly contested than in debates about the meaning of ancient Rome.

This thesis examines the reception of ancient Rome in Victorian literature and culture, with a specific focus on how those receptions were deployed to create useable models of masculinity. I suggest that Rome was more deeply ingrained in the nineteenth-

[8] See Rosemary Jann, *The Art and Science of Victorian History* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1985) for more on these competing elements of nineteenth-century historical writing. The competing demands of 'Reason' and 'Imagination' in the writing of history was also the subject of Thomas Babington Macaulay's essay 'History' in *The Works of Lord Macaulay Complete*, ed. by Lady Trevelyan, 8 vols. (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1860), I:232-281.
[9] [Anon.], 'Lays of Ancient Rome', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine,* 52 (December 1842), p.802.
[10] Mill, 'Spirit of the Age', p.20.

century male psyche than has previously been appreciated by a scholarly tradition which has tended to champion the cultural importance of Greece in the construction of Victorian gender ideals.[11] Pioneering studies of Victorian Hellenism from the 1980s include Richard Jenkyns's *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (1980) and Frank Turner's *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (1981). These works are both informed by and reinforce a narrative that was determinedly promoted by various Victorian institutions and authors themselves, specifically that ancient Greece represented a more fitting moral, aesthetic and cultural ideal than her more problematic Roman counterpart. Indeed, in a 1989 article Frank Turner could ask the question: 'Why the Greeks and Not the Romans in Victorian Britain?'[12] The successors to this initial wave of scholarship include Isobel Hurst, Shanyn Fiske, and Tracey Olverson, authors whose works repurpose earlier studies in the classical tradition and Victorian receptions of Greece, to discuss nineteenth-century femininity.[13] Yet while critical discussion of Victorian Hellenism has expanded to encompass the question of gender, scholarship on Rome has remained largely static. Norman Vance's *The Victorians and Ancient Rome* (1997) remains the only major study to deal exclusively with the Roman inheritance in Victorian literature and culture. This thesis builds on Vance's study, applying to Rome and to Victorian masculinities the same reassessment in light of classical reception and gender studies that Hurst and others, building on Jenkyns, brought

[11] Major works on Victorian Hellenism include Richard Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980) and Frank M. Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (London: Yale University Press, 1981). Turner argued for the primary relevance of Greece over Rome in his article 'Why the Greeks and Not the Romans in Victorian Britain?', in *Rediscovering Hellenism: The Hellenic Inheritance and the English Imagination*, ed. by G.W. Clarke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Works which deal with Victorian receptions of classical antiquity more broadly include: Simon Goldhill, *Victorian Culture and Classical Antiquity: Art, Opera, Fiction, and the Proclamation of Modernity* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011) and Richard Jenkyns, *Dignity and Decadence: Victorian Art and the Classical Inheritance* (London: Harper Collins, 1991). Whilst Jonathan Sachs, in *Romantic Antiquity: Rome in the British Imagination, 1789-1832* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) has helpfully re-examined Romantic uses of Rome, Norman Vance's, *The Victorians and Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997) remains the only critical appraisal of Rome, as distinct from Greece, in the Victorian period.

[12] Frank Turner, 'Why the Greeks and Not the Romans in Victorian Britain?', in *Rediscovering Hellenism: The Hellenic Inheritance and the English Imagination*, ed. by G.W. Clarke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp.61-81.

[13] See Isobel Hurst, *Victorian Women Writers and the Classics: the Feminine of Homer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Shanyn Fiske, *Heretical Hellenism: Women Writers, Ancient Greece, and the Victorian Popular Imagination* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008); T. D. Olverson, *Women Writers and the Dark Side of Late-Victorian Hellenism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

to Greece and nineteenth-century femininity. I aim to correct a narrative which has tended to downplay the importance of Rome for codifications of Victorian manliness.

Despite the self-confident bombast of Arnold and Mill on the modernity of the age, socio-cultural change and the emergence of new knowledges and academic disciplines throughout the century created a need to renegotiate masculine hierarchies based on criteria as diverse as commercial or literary success, physical prowess, domestic values, aesthetic tastes, and religious or civic virtue. The result was a fragmenting of masculine identity and the emergence of competing 'styles' of manliness. Indeed, with the emergence of Masculinity Studies as a discipline in the 1990s, works like Herbert Sussman's *Victorian Masculinities* (1995), James Eli Adams's *Dandies and Desert Saints* (1995), John Tosh's *A Man's Place* (1999) and Andrew Dowling's *Manliness and the Male Novelist* (2001) have been invaluable for establishing how such masculine identities as the man of letters, the imperialist, and the decadent were conceptualized and codified. Furthermore, Masculinity Studies has done much to complicate conventional feminist understandings of Victorian patriarchy, by stressing the internal conflicts and crises which existed in nineteenth-century male culture. As Herbert Sussman notes, Victorian masculinity existed:

> Not as a consensual or unitary formation, but rather as fluid and shifting, a set of contradictions and anxieties so irreconcilable within male life in the present as to be harmonized only through fictive projections into the past, the future or even the afterlife.[14]

Of all the pasts to which Sussman refers, ancient Rome was the most hotly contested. As this thesis will demonstrate, this was primarily because the Roman legacy encompassed innumerable, and often competing narratives and meanings, signifying everything from the loftiest heights of civic and military manliness, to decadence, degeneration and effeminacy.

[14] Herbert Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities: Manhood and Masculine Poetics in Early Victorian Literature and Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp.2-3.

The precise meaning of Rome for Victorian culture was no more fixed and no more stable than the meaning of masculinity itself.

In this context, the multifarious and often contradictory treatments of the Roman example in Victorian literature make sense as part of an overarching thesis on nineteenth-century codifications of masculinity. Understanding Rome as a contested space, with an array of possible scripts and narratives that could be harnessed to frame models of masculine ideality, or to vilify perceived deviance from those ideals, allows for an understanding of masculinity as being rooted in the power of reception. I present a model of Victorian masculinity wherein masculine dominance, whether individual or collective, is derived from the perceived authority to assign meaning to Rome as an image, and to determine its usage either as a badge of merit or a condemnation of certain gendered traits. In this context, then, it seems hardly surprising that Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome* should have tapped into contemporary debates about manliness. With material drawn from Livy's histories, but framed as imagined translations of what Macaulay – following Niebuhr – claimed was an earlier, lost tradition of Latin ballad poetry, the poems celebrate a patriotic, paternalistic style of political manliness. 'The old Romans had some great virtues,' Macaulay writes in his introduction to the text; 'fortitude, temperance, veracity, spirit to resist oppression, respect for legitimate authority, fidelity in the observing of contracts, disinterestedness, ardent patriotism.'[15] They are values dramatized in the poems themselves, as Macaulay sets up a nostalgic vision of a Roman state in which bonds between citizens are constructed as fraternal (according to gender) and paternalistic (according to social class), but wherein all male citizens have the capacity to be heroic. In 'Horatius', for instance, the eponymous hero's courage in defending his country from invasion is likened to that of an even earlier generation of venerable statesmen:

[15] Thomas Babington Macaulay, 'Introduction', in *The Lays of Ancient Rome* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1842), p.22.

> Then none was for a party;
> Then all were for the state;
> Then the great man helped the poor,
> And the poor man loved the great:
> Then lands were fairly portioned;
> Then spoils were fairly sold:
> The Romans were like brothers
> In the brave old days of old.[16]

This patriotic, though undoubtedly paternalistic, vision of society, with its emphasis on fairer distribution of land and wealth, echoes strongly the rhetoric of political reform for which Macaulay himself is best remembered. The greatness of Rome as a society – and, by extension, as the great empire she will one day become – is dependent upon the willingness of her male citizens to be manly and to take action in the name of civic duty. The third lay, for instance, deals with the tale of Virginia, a Roman maiden whose murder at the hands of her father was intended to preserve her honour from the lust of the corrupt patrician Appius Claudius, and her freedom from being unjustly claimed as his slave. The murder of Virginia led to popular revolt against the oligarchic *decimviri*, and the re-establishment of the republic in Rome. In Macaulay's poem, the call for popular action is made by Virginia's betrothed Icilius, and is framed as a matter of civic and masculine duty:

> Now by your children's cradles, now
> By your fathers' graves,
> Be men today, Quirites, or be forever slaves![17]

The male citizen's defence of fatherland and family, of national and domestic values, as well as political resistance to the hegemony of a landed aristocracy, are all subtexts encoded into the reference to fathers and children in this passage. They are designated as idealized values by which nineteenth-century readers too could 'be men'. Conversely, they establish an implicit indictment of men who do not share such views as being

[16] Macaulay, *Lays,* p.38.
[17] Macaulay, *Lays,* pp. 111-112.

fundamentally unmasculine: 'slaves', in Macaulay's formulation of political manliness, suggests disenfranchisement and exclusion from all access to civic virtue. The poem privileges certain meanings and narratives from the ancient Roman past, but couches them in the recognisably nineteenth-century rhetoric of reform and abolition. By tapping into the cultural authority of the classical tradition – in this case to the early history of Rome via the literary works of Livy – Macaulay is compiling a past for what he considers to be the spirit and values of his own age. This retrospective replanting of the roots of Victorian identity also creates an imagined genealogy of political manliness and establishes the Victorian reformer as the heir of the Roman hero from 'the brave old days of old'. It is a prime example of what Charles Martindale terms the 'two-way…dialogue'[18] between past and present. The *Lays* represent what I posit is a universal tension in Victorian writing about Rome, whereby the act of reception itself is necessarily, and often knowingly, made to function as part of an articulation or validation of a particular masculine ideal. Thus do we find nineteenth-century conflicts or crises of masculinity, such as the antagonistic relationship between the New Imperialist and the Dandy of fin-de-siècle culture, manifesting as a struggle over authoritative uses of the Roman parallel. The chapters that follow are organized to show how Rome was used to conceptualize and codify different 'styles' of manliness in a variety of literary and cultural contexts, and in light of nineteenth-century discourses on education, reform, colonialism, and degeneration.

In chapter one, 'Imperial Boys and Men of Letters: Education and Manliness in the Nineteenth Century', I explore the ways that Victorian boys were exposed to the history, narratives, and literary texts of ancient Rome. I suggest that Rome was central to the forging of elite male consciousness and identity at both an individual and collective level, and that Roman culture and the Latin language supplied middle and upper class boys with

[18] Charles Martindale, 'Reception', in *A Companion to the Classical Tradition,* ed. by Craig Kallendorf (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp.297-311 (p.298).

a network of references with which they could frame all manner of conflict and alliance. Furthermore, I argue that the two-pronged educational approach of the Victorian public school, which encompassed rigorous training in classical languages as well as physical education and games, was intended to foster robust manliness of the imperialist or muscular Christian type, but also its (often overlooked) intellectual equivalent – the Man of Letters. These interconnected masculine ideals are both derived from classical archetypes, such as those found in Horace, and they are both constructed by means of classical references in Victorian schoolboy fiction.

Chapter two, 'Reforming Romans', examines the ideological importance of Rome for creating non-violent models of political authority in the age of political reform. I account for the seemingly-anomalous refusal of the male elites discussed in the previous chapter to draw comparisons with ancient Rome in the parliamentary debates of the 1830s. Political receptions of Rome are shown to be complicated and even radicalized in the age of reform by French revolutionary and Napoleonic uses of this same Roman past. By the 1860s and 70s, however, there emerged a growing frustration with the supposed timidity of political elites to engage with the Roman past, and I chart the re-engagement of writers like Anthony Trollope with Rome as a means of framing partisan political ideologies.

Chapter three canvasses some of the major cultural intersections between empire, masculinity and the classical tradition to account for why, in the New Imperialist discourse of the 1880s onwards, it had become difficult to speak of empire and the associated models of hardy imperial manliness without recourse to the Roman parallel. I situate this problem in the context of larger transformations in the nature of the British Empire from a naval, commercial enterprise – for which ancient Greece and the Athenian empire proved a more fitting parallel – to an expansionist land-based project which drew increasingly on Roman models.

My final chapter examines the uses of decadent Rome in fin-de-siècle discourses of aestheticism and decadence to account for the anxious, even antagonistic relationship between the New Imperialist male and the dandy figure in late nineteenth-century culture. I demonstrate how writers like Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw were invested in the construction of a revisionist counter narrative to the Gibbonian model of 'decline and fall', and especially of decline and fall as being catalyzed by decadent (and therefore failed or diseased) masculine vigour.

By taking as my focus in each chapter a particular 'style' of nineteenth-century manliness, and the writing produced in support of its particular values and ideologies, I have been able to set Victorian uses of Rome in their wider cultural and social contexts. As such, this thesis utilizes the methodologies of reception studies to make a significant contribution to the field of masculinity studies. By understanding Victorian receptions of Rome as being inherently bound up with questions of masculinity, we can better account for the manifold and often contradictory manifestations of Rome in Victorian writing. Romans in Victorian literature are at once pagan persecutors, pious statesmen, pleasure-seeking decadents, and heroes of empire. The same Roman parallel was used to capture the martial virtue of Wellington as was used to condemn the deviance and degeneracy of Oscar Wilde. Understood through the lens of masculinity, Victorian receptions of Rome become more comprehensible: Rome is contested because masculinity is contested. There are many competing visions of Rome because there are many competing styles of masculinity. Far from attempting to artificially homogenize or to impose a singular narrative of Victorian reception, the aim of this thesis is to explore its complexity and to explain its central conflict as a struggle over the codification of manliness whereby the cultural authority to assign meaning to the Roman age is equivalent to and indicative of the power to speak authoritatively about masculinity in the present.

Chapter One

Imperial Boys and Men of Letters: Education and Manliness in the Nineteenth Century

> Many heroes lived before Agamemnon:
> but all are oppressed in unending night,
> unwept and unknown, because they lack
> a dedicated poet.
>
> - Horace[19]

This verse from the Roman poet Horace celebrates two very different but interconnected models of manliness in western culture: the warrior and the bard, the fighter and the writer. These two are dependent upon each other: the bard needs great acts to chronicle, and without the bard to record his heroism, the man of action is doomed to be lost in the 'unending night' of anonymity. These intertwined Horatian ideals permeate schoolboy fictions of the nineteenth century, such as Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857), F.W. Farrar's *Eric* (1858), and Rudyard Kipling's *Stalky and Co.* (1899). However, the robustly physical style of manliness is more immediately apparent in these novels, and has therefore been the focus of significantly more scholarly attention. Critics have long acknowledged the prevalence in the nineteenth century of a two-pronged educational approach which encompassed school sports and physical fitness as well as vigorous training in classical languages, and was intended to instil in boys the physical and ideological qualities of the muscular Christian or the New Imperialist.[20] Janet Montefiore writes that:

> Education was closely linked to imperialism in late-nineteenth-century 'public' schools whose curriculum consisted of classical languages and

[19] Horace, Ode IV:9, in *The Complete Odes and Epodes,* trans. by W.G. Shepherd (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), p.185.
[20] For more on the link between school sports and imperial ideology see: J.A. Mangan, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism: Aspects of the Diffusion of an Ideal* (London: Frank Cass, 1998); Joseph Bristow, *Empire Boys: Adventures in a Man's World* (London: Harper Collins, 1991).

> literature […] and team games, supposedly inculcating courage, *spirit-de-corps*, obedience to orders and general 'manliness' […] Classical literature was preferred because its inspiring examples of patriotism and public spirit ('role models', as we say now), would inspire the young gentlemen to emulate the aristocratic Roman virtues of *gravitas* and authority.[21]

I argue that this very physical masculine ideal also has an often-overlooked intellectual equivalent – a poet or statesman to complement the warrior – and that the masculine identities of both are forged and underwritten by classical learning.

The study of Latin and Greek, although it was subject to significant changes and challenges, remained firmly at the heart of elite male education throughout the century.[22] Boys grappled with Latin conjugations and translated classical authors as a means of progressing to the upper forms of Britain's grammar schools. Qualifications in Latin were a compulsory requirement for entry into Oxford and Cambridge (and would remain so well into the 1960s),[23] as well as being necessary for any young man embarking upon a career as a civil servant, a military officer, a lawyer or a member of parliament. Classical learning was, as Gauri Viswanathan notes, 'a pre-requisite for social leadership and, more subtly, the means by which social privilege was protected.'[24] Shared networks of classical reference and allusion, and even the shared experiences of arduous rote learning in the classroom, led to what Christopher Stray has termed 'the mutual reinforcement of male group solidarity'[25] among Victorian gentlemen, and underwrote a sense of collective masculine identity. They also functioned as a means by which elite male culture could police its own boundaries, excluding individuals or groups who did not possess the same

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[21] Janet Montefiore, 'Latin, Arithmetic and Mastery: A Reading of Two Kipling Fictions', in *Modernism and Empire*, ed. by Howard J. Booth and Nigel Rigby (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).
[22] For more on the changing approaches to the teaching of classics by Oxford and Cambridge in the nineteenth century see Christopher Stray, 'Non-Identical Twins: Classics in Nineteenth-Century Oxford and Cambridge', in *Oxford Classics: Teaching and Learning 1800-2000* (London: Duckworth, 2007), pp.1-13; *Classics in 19th and 20th Century Cambridge: Curriculum, Culture and Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1999); and Hurst, pp.21-27.
[23] See Martin Forrest, 'The Abolition of Compulsory Latin and Its Consequences', *Greece & Rome*, 50 (2003), pp.42-66 (p.42).
[24] Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Studies and British Rule in India* (London: Faber, 1990), p. 69.
[25] Christopher Stray, *Classics Transformed: Schools, Universities, and Society in England, 1830-1960* (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1998), p.11.

training, most notably the lower classes and women. In the first part of this chapter, I chart this process of identity formation in detail, outlining the various forms in which Victorian boys would be exposed to Roman texts and narratives. As a result of such a determinedly classical education, Rome was deeply ingrained in the male psyche, and this is evidenced in both the content and the semantic structures of schoolboy fiction. For Tom Brown, Eric, and Stalky, Latin is both the process by which boys become men, and the designator of that manliness, with senior male figures like Thomas Arnold often being constructed as Caesar-like figures at the top of an ascending scale of maturity and seniority. Rome is both the maker and the marker of elite Victorian manliness in both its physical and intellectual varieties. Even as competing styles of masculinity emerged in the form of the captains of science and industry – epitomized by men like Charles Darwin, who claimed to have achieved success in spite of, rather than because of a classical education – classics continued to function as a social and cultural passport throughout the century.

In the second part of the chapter I examine more closely constructions of intellectual – or literary – masculinity and the Man of Letters, whose identity, like those of his cousins the New Imperialist and the Muscular Christian, is also derived from classical exemplars, but whose manliness is encoded more subtly, even metatextually, into works like Kipling's *Stalky*. I argue that the refiguration of writing as a heroic act equivalent, and even superior to fighting, held a particular appeal for Victorian culture which perceived itself to have a uniquely modern relationship with the written word. Thus, of all the heroic types identified by Carlyle in 'On Heroes and Hero-Worship' (1841), the 'Hero as Man of Letters' is a distinctly modern figure, born out of a culture of printing and mass publishing:

> Hero-Gods, Prophets, Poets, Priests are forms of Heroism that belong to the old ages, make their appearance in the remotest times; some of them have ceased to be possible long since, and cannot any more show themselves in this world. The Hero as *Man of Letters* […] is altogether a product of these new ages; and so long as the wondrous art of *Writing*, or of Ready-writing

> which we call *Printing*, subsists, he may be expected to continue, as one of the main forms of Heroism for all future ages. He is, in various respects, a very singular phenomenon.'[26]

Carlyle goes on to explain that 'Certainly the Art of Writing is the most miraculous of all things man has devised […] In Books lies the *soul* of the whole Past Time; the articulate audible voice of the Past, when the body and material substance of it has altogether vanished like a dream.'[27] The Man of Letters, then, was seen to embody a unique and ostensibly superior form of manliness in that he both reflected the spirit of his age, and conditioned how future generations would perceive the values of his society as part of an on-going tradition. After all, the great deeds of heroes like Achilles and Aeneas would be nothing without the literary labours of Homer and Virgil. It is a sentiment which still held true for the Reverend J. Hiles Hitchens at the close of the century, who insisted in his 1898 article on 'Manliness', that part of what it meant to be manly in the nineteenth century was to possess 'an immortal and expansive mind, capable of looking outward, inward, around and above: capable of ranging over the fields of the past and gathering treasures for present possession and future employment.'[28] Hitchens's use of the word 'immortal' is a telling one. It implies that, despite the modernity of the Man of Letters as a masculine ideal, maturity and manliness are attained through exposure to, training in, and mastery of the collective and cumulative knowledges of a long-established literary and historical tradition. A man can only be truly 'heroic' when he is knowledgeable enough not only to read the texts, languages and discourses which make up his own heritage, but to contribute to that heritage by producing new ones.

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[26] Thomas Carlyle, 'The Hero as Man of Letters', *Heroes, Hero Worship and the Heroic in History* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1896-1899), p.154.
[27] Carlyle, *Hero as Man of Letters,* p.160.
[28] Rev. J. Hiles Hitchens, 'Manliness', *Quiver,* 31 (Jan 1896), pp.409-411 (p.409).

1.1 Reading, Reception, and Elite Education

The opening chapter of *Jane Eyre* (1847) famously finds the child protagonist confronting her cousin, the bully John Reed, with the defiant assertion that 'You are like a murderer – you are like a slave-driver – you are like the Roman emperors!'[29] The episode not only establishes that Victorian children – at least the children of the middle and upper classes – were familiar with some of the texts, tropes and narratives of the ancient world, but also dramatizes the role of the classics in the formation and articulation of identities, and especially gender identities, by children. Jane explains that 'I had read Goldsmith's *History of Rome*, and had formed my opinions of Nero, Caligula, &c. Also, I had drawn parallels in silence, which I never thought thus to have declared aloud.'[30] Literature allows the child to conceive of her world according to certain historical and literary traditions, supplying her with scripts and signifiers by which she can come to understand her own place in it and, most importantly, a vocabulary with which she might articulate her own subjectivity. In recent decades there has been a determined critical focus on the accessibility of classical education for women in positions like Jane's, and on the use of classical allusion by writers like Elizabeth Barrett Browning and George Eliot as a form of feminine resistance to Victorian gender inequalities.[31] Such an approach has contributed much to feminist reassessments of Victorian literature and culture. Yet it has tended to produce an apparently complementary, though inherently problematic, view of masculine identity as a unified, rigidly patriarchal oppressor of nineteenth-century femininity, which has received notably

[29] Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2003), p.17.
[30] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, p.17.
[31] See Hurst, *Victorian Women Writers and the Classics*; T.D. Olverson, *Women Writers and the Dark Side of Late-Victorian Hellenism*; Yopie Prins, '"Lady's Greek" (with the Accents): A Metrical Translation of Euripides by A. Mary F. Robinson', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 34 (2006), pp.591-618; Marion Thain, *Michael Field: Poetry, Aestheticism and the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

less scrutiny. It is an imbalance Heather Ellis describes as 'an overestimation of the differences between men and women at the expense of the differences between men.'[32]

Certainly Victorian texts about education reveal a deep-seated cultural anxiety about the reading habits of boys and the consequences of illicit reading for adult masculinities. On one level this is a straightforward anxiety about the impact of content on the minds and behaviour of young people that bears comparison with 20th- and 21st-century debates about the influence of violent video games. In the nineteenth century, however, such anxieties were more sharply gendered, with numerous handbooks published to provide advice to parents about which novels were most likely to encourage desirable gender traits in young children.[33] Charlotte M. Yonge's *What Books to Lend and What to Give* (1887) recommends heroic tales like *Leonard the Lion Heart* – a story designed to teach boys the fallacy of boasting – for very young male readers. She goes on to allocate a separate section for older boys, since: 'The mild tales that girls will read simply to pass away the time are ineffective with them.'[34] Excitement and adventure are called for so as to engage the male mind, but a book must still have some moral message or make some contribution to the elevation of boys towards maturity and virtue in order to be considered worthy. J.H. Ewing's *Jackanapes* (1879) for instance is praised as a 'beautiful story [which] wins the attention of boys' but 'those who read it to them find it advisable to skip the unnecessary

[32] Heather Ellis, '"Boys, Semi-Men and Bearded Scholars": Maturity and Manliness in Early Nineteenth-Century Oxford', in *What is Masculinity? Historical Dynamics from Antiquity to the Contemporary World*, ed. by S. Brady and J.H. Arnold (London: Palgrave, 2011), pp.263-283 (p.263). See also John Tosh, 'What Should Historians Do With Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain', *History Workshop Journal*, 38 (1994), pp.179-202 (p.183).

[33] See Judy Simons, 'Gender Roles in Children's Fiction', *The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature*, ed. by M. O. Grenby and Andrew Immel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp.143-158.

[34] Charlotte M. Yonge, *What Books to Lend and What to Give* (London: National Society's Repository, 1887), p.29. For more on gendered reading prescriptions see Edward J. Salmon, 'What Girls Read', *Nineteenth Century*, 20: 116 (1886), pp. 516-527; Anna Eloise Pierce, *Catalogue of Literature for Advisers of Young Women and Girls; An Annotated List of More Than Two Thousand Titles of the Most Representative and Useful Books and Periodical Articles for the Use of Deans and Other Advisers of Young Women and Girls* (New York: The H. W. Wilson Company, 1923); Kelly Boyd, *Manliness and the Boys' Story Paper in Britain; A Cultural History 1855-1940* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

incident of the elopement,'[35] elopement being, of course, incompatible with the values and behaviour society wished its adolescent boys to assimilate. Yonge reserves her highest praise for *Tom Brown's Schooldays* and the improving effect it can have on boys, even if their own social status and language patterns differ from those depicted in the book: 'The life is so fresh and wholesome in spirit that, though the sphere is so different from that of the elementary school-boy, his tone may be raised by it.'[36] There is a clear assumption here that wholesome and hardy literature will help to produce wholesome and hardy boys, and an equivalent fear that pernicious literature will corrupt or emasculate.

Reading, then, was a vital process by which cultural maturity could be attained and adult masculinity formed. Indeed, the schoolboy novels of Hughes, Farrar and Kipling are a particularly rich source of evidence about the kinds of texts and genres boys could access and were choosing to read. In *Stalky and Co* alone, we find the intrepid trio of Stalky, Beetle and M'Turk consuming between them, in addition to their classical set texts, volumes of Ruskin, De Quincey, Dickens, Shakespeare, Johnson, Milton, Swift, Pope, Addison, Ainsworth, Macaulay, historical novels, adventure novels, Farrar's *Eric*, Surtees's *Jorrocks* stories, boys' papers, *Punch*, Gilbert and Sullivan and *Uncle Remus*. The fact that boys seemed as willing to read illicit literature as they were to read high-brow texts was troubling to educators like Thomas Arnold, who worried that the former might produce in boys 'weakness of mind',[37] immorality and unmanliness. Arnold's concerns are vindicated in Kipling's novel, which draws a direct correlation between the languages boys acquired through reading and the forging of masculine hierarchies. In the story entitled 'The United Idolaters', volumes of Uncle Remus are passed around the Coll., with the result that they alter, for better or worse, for the remainder of term the boys' patterns of speech. 'The book

[35] Yonge, p.33.
[36] Yonge, p.31.
[37] J.J. Findlay, *Arnold of Rugby* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1897), pp.160-161.

was amazing' we are told; 'and full of quotations that one could hurl like javelins.'[38] Literature functions for the boys as a kind of armoury, into which they will gather the languages and social speech types to which they have been exposed, and from which they will select the language needed to frame and articulate conflict. In a similar fashion the boys, upon returning from summer break, 'bring back odds and ends of speech – theatre, opera and music hall gags – from the great holiday world' (p.143). A child's world, and the codes through which he might interact with others, are being continually formed through language absorbed from reading across an ever-expanding heteroglossia of texts and cultural encounters. Nonetheless, the single most consistent, pervasive, and directed literary influence in the formative years of Britain's elite young men was the classics and, in particular, Latin.

From the earliest years of a boy's education, manliness and distinction amongst his peers were bound up with his aptitude for and attitudes toward classical learning. Certainly John Stuart Mill recognizes in his *Autobiography* (1873) a narrative in which boys' exposure to classics both produces and reflects the nature of their masculinity. The early chapters of Mill's work are constructed as an account of his coming to maturity through reading, and his subsequent fulfilling of the role of the Man of Letters through writing. The early chapters are, in essence, a reading list, documenting the texts – chiefly classical – whose languages and ideas have been the most influential in the formation of his own sense of self. Books are figured here as the building blocks of the man, both in terms of the development of Mill's own subjectivity, and in the metatextual sense whereby the autobiography itself is the literary work of a great, well-educated man. Mill learned Greek from the age of three and read Aesop's *Fables*, Xenophon's *Anabasis* and a host of other texts in the original language under the tutelage of his father. 'I learned no Latin until my eighth year' he tells us, though he quickly masters 'the Latin Grammar, and a considerable

[38] Rudyard Kipling, *The Complete Stalky and Co.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.144. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

part of Cornelius Nepos and Caesar's Commentaries.'[39] From the ages of eight to twelve he is systematically exposed to what his father and Victorian society consider to be the most canonical, useful and instructive texts for young boys. These include the *Bucolics*, books 1-6 of the *Aeneid*, 'all Horace except the Epodes,'[40] the *Fables* of Phaedrus, 'the first five books of Livy (to which from [his] love of the subject [he] voluntarily added, in [his] hours of leisure, the remainder of the first decade),'[41] Sallust, Ovid, Terence, Lucretius and the orations, oratory and letters of Cicero. Mill, like Jane Eyre, supplemented his required reading with history books and it appears that, whilst Greek may have been the preferred language of his household, his 'favourite historical reading was Hooke's History of Rome.'[42]

Mill's educational experience, superintended by his father, was unconventional in its intensity. Nonetheless, for children of middle and upper class families who were not subject to the same educational regimes, youthful encounters with the ancient civilization began from the youngest years, perhaps even before a child learned to read. Kathryn Prince has highlighted a publishing trend in the first half of the century for illustrations of Shakespearean characters costing one penny plain or two pence hand-coloured, which were designed to be cut out and used in children's toy theatres.[43] George Speaight's *The Juvenile Drama: A Union Catalogue* (1999) shows that, of the fourteen Shakespeare plays published as toy theatre sheets, *Anthony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus* were amongst them, whilst Julius Caesar proved so popular as to be released by three different publishing houses.[44] Children were becoming acquainted with the rudiments of Roman history and imagery through these mediating forms in the nursery, long before they were old enough or

[39] John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p.8.
[40] Mill, *Autobiography*, p. 13.
[41] Mill, *Autobiography*, p.8.
[42] Mill, *Autobiography*, p.7.
[43] Kathryn Price, 'Shakespeare in the Victorian Children's Periodicals' in *Shakespeare and Childhood*, ed. by Kate Chedgzoy, Susanne Greenhalgh and Robert Shaughnessy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp.153-168 (pp.157-158).
[44] George Speaight, *The Juvenile Drama: A Union Catalogue* (London: The Society for Theatre Research, 1999), p.2.

literate enough to even progress to the library. History books, too, were adapted for young readers and offered glimpses into Roman culture. Such volumes included Julia Corner's *The History of Rome* (1856) which was specially adapted for children and families, and W.R. Johnson's *The History of England, in Easy Verse: from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Close of the Year 1809. Written for the Purpose of Being Committed to Memory by Young Persons of Both Sexes* (1810).

For the majority of boys, however, the dual-pronged task of learning Latin and becoming a man was begun in earnest at a local Latin school, the likes of which feature so prominently in the early chapters of schoolboy novels. It is here that most boys would have their first serious encounter with canonical Latin authors, simultaneously with their first foray into a competitive all-male environment. Here they must demonstrate knowledge of sanctioned 'manly' narratives if they wish to progress up hierarchies of the classroom. Farrar's Eric, for instance, enters Dr Rowland's school and is immediately confronted with the works of Caesar, which the class is being made to construe.[45] The school bully, Barker, attempts to force Eric to accept his lowly position as newcomer and omega in the classroom hierarchy by publicly refusing to share his copy of the text. But Eric is able to win for himself some social standing through his grasp of the Latin language: 'He afterwards won several places by answering questions, and at the end of the lesson was marked about halfway up the form'.[46] Latin becomes the maker and the marker of boyhood authority as the remainder of the novel sees Eric move from Latin school to boarding school, where he is confronted with the temptations of schoolboy popularity including smoking, bullying and 'cribbing'. Where honest learning of Latin signifies masculine virtue in the novel, 'cribbing' or cheating by using Latin 'vulguses' is a sign of a weak character and hinders a boy's progression to mature manhood. The Latin master is dismayed to find that the boys have been cheating *en masse* through the use of cribs and by

[45] F.W. Farrar, *Eric; or, Little By Little* ([n.p]: Dodo Press, 2007), pp.12-15.
[46] Farrar, *Eric*, p.15.

tacking a pre-prepared translation of their set text to the front of the teacher's desk. 'I took you for gentlemen.' He tells them. 'I was mistaken.'[47] Eric's failure to work diligently and honestly in his translations foreshadows a broader, and ultimately fatal, failure of manliness on his part. Rather than learning from the saint-like examples of his brother Vernon and best friend Russell, Eric embraces drink and gambling and other brutish pursuits, and runs away to sea. He eventually repents and returns to the domestic space of his aunt's home at around the time that his boyhood companions are progressing on to university as young men. Eric is reduced by illness to a state of infantile helplessness before succumbing to the disease, which functions as a metaphor for failed or corrupted masculine virtue.[48]

In *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, Thomas Hughes constructs a direct equivalence between a boy's attitude towards his Latin studies, his place in the hierarchies of the school as a homosocial environment, and the particular style or quality of his masculinity. In a half-satirical and half-nostalgic episode, Hughes describes the boys of Rugby School as they prepare their weekly exercises in Latin translation, each boy taking a different, but equally telling approach to the task. These approaches include the 'Dogged' or 'Prosaic' method in which a boy translates the prescribed text with accuracy and diligence but little artistic flair; the 'Artistic' method in which a boy translates honestly and from scratch and, with sufficient hard work, ends up with a piece of writing which is polished, poetic and lofty; and the 'Vicarious' method, which is far removed from any ideal of manliness since it involves merely bullying others into translating the text rather than attempting the work oneself. The 'Dogged' approach is the one favoured by Tom's friend Martin, who shows little hope of fulfilling the criteria of the Man of Letters, but who uses the same diligence and practical hard work he applies to his schoolboy Latin to pursue a successful career in the imperial service. The 'Artistic' method, on the other hand, is the approach championed

[47] Farrar, *Eric*, p.37.
[48] For more on Eric as a narrative of failed masculinity, see Jenny Holt, *Public School Literature, Civic Education and the Politics of Male Adolescence* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp.85-100.

by Tom's closest friend Arthur who, by the end of the novel, is 'less of a boy in fact than Tom, if one may judge from the thoughtfulness of his face.'[49] Arthur's honesty and diligence in Latin lead to the acquisition of skills which will allow him to fulfil the role of the Man of Letters, acquiring masculine authority through intellect and writing, rather than combativeness and fighting.

Tom's own preferred approach to Latin meanwhile is the *vulgus* – workbooks of former students who have already completed the prescribed translation exercises. The use of the vulgus is the approach favoured by popular but misguided boys, since vulgus books were often 'duly handed down from boy to boy' (p.260), with the most popular therefore accumulating many volumes. Hughes implies that this approach may see a boy through his lessons, but will deprive him in his adult years, as the Master predicts Tom will be robbed, of 'all the delicate shades of meaning which make the best part of the fun' (p.353). The novel very clearly uses Latin, and approaches to teaching and learning of that language, as a vehicle for exposing and exploring different facets of masculine identity. It is for this reason that Arthur, in what the reader assumes will be his dying wish to Tom during a bout of fever, requests that Tom stop using vulguses in his work 'because you're the honestest [*sic*] boy in Rugby, and that ain't honest' (p.313). The appeal to his manlier qualities makes Tom reconsider his behaviour in the hope of becoming a better man. Arthur's appeal has the desired effect, both in the smaller sense of encouraging Tom to take a more diligent approach to his studies, and in the wider context of prompting him to embrace a more virtuous standard of masculine behaviour. To this end, the novel closes with a final chapter set several years after the events at Rugby school, in which a now adult Tom

[49] Thomas Hughes, *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p.351. See pp.261-63 on the four attitudes to Latin translation. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

Brown, unlike Farrar's Eric, is shown to have attained the standards and virtues of muscular Christian manliness.[50]

In Kipling's *Stalky and Co.,* the Coll. where Stalky, M'Turk and Beetle are boarders is intended to foster a very different style of manliness to the earnest muscular Christianity of *Tom Brown* and *Eric*. Based on Kipling's own experiences of the United Services College at Westward Ho! in Devon, the Coll. is mandated to produce hardy imperial boys who will grow up to serve the empire as embodiments of New Imperialist manliness. Characterized, as I describe in chapter three, by a general reluctance to be morally prescriptive and a tendency to be disinterested in questions of abstract morality, New Imperialist discourse championed bodily health and physical labour as masculine virtues, even imbuing these traits with a quasi-moral dimension of their own.[51] In this regard, the New Imperialist, out of all the styles of manliness I describe in this thesis, is the figure who most closely resembles Horace's classical hero or warrior. As such, where Tom Brown's virtuous schoolmates would be dismayed to find their friend engaged in activities like fighting, stealing or general aggression, for the boys of the Coll., such behaviours are commonplace and will become necessary for survival and success in the adult world of military service. Indeed, violence and imperialist instincts are established as part of the boys' identities, and their systems of communication, from the opening of the novel. In the first story the intrepid trio go on an expedition into the countryside, taking 'no account of stiles or footpaths, crossing field after field diagonally, and where they found a hedge, bursting through it' (p.14) in a foreshadowing of imperial territorial impulse. The boys' communication is equally physical and even aggressive. When trying to decide on how to spend their day off, Stalky responds to a suggestion by M'Turk by 'kick[ing] him as he had

[50] See William E. Winn, 'Tom Brown's Schooldays and the Development of "Muscular Christianity"', *Church History*, 29 (1960), pp.64-73; Dennis W. Allen, 'Young England: Muscular Christianity and the Politics of the Body in *Tom Brown's Schooldays*' in *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age*, ed. by Donald E. Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp.114-32; Norman Vance, *Sinews of Spirit: The Ideal of Christian Manliness in Victorian Literature and Religious Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp.134-165 on Tom Brown as an embodiment of muscular Christianity.
[51] See Susan Kingsley Kent, *Gender and Power in Britain 1640-1990* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp.202-229 for more on imperialist identity and ideals in relation to other gender models.

kicked Beetle; and even as Beetle, M'Turk took not the faintest notice. By the etiquette of their friendship, this was no more than a formal notice of dissent from a proposition' (p.13). Violence and physicality have become encoded into the boys' systems of communication because such traits also underpin the New Imperialist ideals to which they aspire.

Although the novels depict the forging of two quite different masculine ideals – New Imperialism in *Stalky and Co.*, and Muscular Christianity in *Tom Brown* and *Eric* – both position the reading of Rome and the learning of Latin as central to the process of making boys into men. For Kipling, Latin functions as a practical route to masculine seniority and superiority, since 'Army examiners gave thousands of marks for Latin' (p.157) and failure to achieve the necessary grades could result in exclusion from military academies like Sandhurst, and from the more senior ranks of the officer corps. But the link between Latin and manliness is also embedded into the semantic structures of the text. Thus in *Stalky and Co.*, the effort required to master the language is couched, according to imperialist privileging of physical labour, in the rhetoric of the physical exertion of a sailor or soldier. Boys must first gain the skills required to navigate 'a reef of uncharted genitives' (p.159) before progressing to more practical applications, such as those demonstrated by Stalky's friend Winton, who is punished for releasing a mouse in the classroom by being made to translate lines from Virgil. The Latin master, who is also the head of Winton's house, takes pity on him and assists him in his toil by dictating the verses. He is therefore incorporated into the metaphor of physical labour: 'King paid out the glorious hexameters [...] Winton hauling them in and coiling them away behind him as trimmers in a telegraph ship's hold coil away deep-sea cable' (p.169).

As well as constituting the process through which boys might access public life and adult professions, then, Latin and Roman parallels also become signifiers of that manliness in schoolboy fiction. Indeed, in the hierarchical world of the public school, seniority and

rank are often represented through direct reference to Roman figures, as seen in the distinctions between masters and well as boys. Whilst teachers, sixth formers and a number of other authority figures might provide examples of manliness, the authoritative version of masculinity in the world of the schoolboy novel is usually to be found in the headmaster. Thus, in the episode that sees Winton punished and later flogged for his misbehaviour, the Latin master, Mr King, appeals to the Head in an (unashamedly biased) attempt to save a member of his own house from punishment:

> Though King as pro-consul might, and did, infernally oppress his own Province, once a black and yellow cap was in trouble at the hands of the Imperial authority King fought for him to the very last steps of Caesar's throne (p.166).

Whilst King's role is figured as that of a pro-consul, with almost absolute power within his own province (or, in this case, his house), the overarching authority of the head is made abundantly clear through the parallel with Caesar. Here Kipling is no doubt referring to the supreme authority of Caesar in the Roman state after he was granted the dictatorship for life in 44BC, which gave him unlimited authority over all other Roman office-holders. Furthermore, like so many of the Heads of schoolboy fiction, Caesar's legacy was cultural as well as practical – he governed the legions under his control whilst also producing literary works.[52] The parallel is not only deployed by the narrator, but by Stalky and his friends, who are learning to draw comparisons between the literary worlds of their reading and the hierarchies of their own society. The boys use the same Roman reference system to mock King, who is the head of a rival house. They recall of one of his lessons that 'He came; he sniffed; he said things' (p.85). Here King's continual grasping after power in the school is derided through a parodic reference to Caesar's 'Veni, vidi, vici'.[53] It is a joke

[52] For more on receptions of Caesar see *Julius Caesar in Western Culture*, ed. by Maria Wyke (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), esp. pp.15-21: 'Verdicts on Caesar: Writer and Commander'.
[53] Plutarch, 'Caesar', 50, in *Fall of the Roman Republic*, trans. by Rex Warner (London: Penguin, 1972), pp.243-310 (p.292); Suetonius, 'Julius Caesar', 37, in *The Twelve Caesars*, trans. by Robert Graves (London: Penguin, 1979), pp.1-44 (p.18).

intended to amuse a readership who had received or were receiving an education in similarly classical references, creating a kind of elite male 'in-joke' at King's expense, and one which mocks his inferiority to the more admirable (at least in the boys' eyes) manliness of the Headmaster. Yet, despite mocking King as an individual, this kind of parodic reference also cements the importance of King's subject, Latin, to the masculine identities of the boys. After all, their ridicule is couched in the references and languages which he has taught them, and they come to conceptualize masculine hierarchies in the school, and then in the wider world of military service, according to similar frameworks and often with Caesar exemplifying the highest levels of manliness in such formulations.

Perhaps the most significant use of the Caesar parallel to denote seniority in the world of the boarding school novel, however, is the metafictional portrayal of Thomas Arnold of Rugby by Thomas Hughes and his contemporaries. In fact, the portrayal extended beyond the fictional realms of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, propagated by former pupils who had known Arnold in life, or who had attended schools similar to Arnold's Rugby and shared in the same elite masculine values and networks of classical reference. In his biography of Arnold, A.P. Stanley recalls the headmaster's saying modestly: 'I should like to be *aut Caesar aut nullus*, and as it is pretty well settled for me that I shall not be Caesar, I am quite content to live in peace as *nullus.*'[54] Arnold suggests here that his authority and impact upon the wider world have been so minimal as to render him a *nullus* or 'nobody'. However, he underestimates the extent of his authority in the microcosmic world of the school and his own power in shaping the characters of the boys under his care. Hughes' translation of this effect into fiction sees Tom Brown, by the end of his final term, rejecting in many ways his father's style of combative Regency-style masculinity in favour of Arnold's style of muscular Christian masculinity. Tom's natural father, we are told,

[54] A.P.Stanley, quoted in James Eli Adams, *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity* (London: Cornell University Press, 1995), p.68.

'dealt out justice and mercy in a rough way, and begat sons and daughters, and hunted the fox' (p.16). He embodies an almost feudal type of Regency manliness, which the novel rejects as a useful model for young boys to follow, and which Jeffrey Richards has identified with 'drinking, ruinous gambling, horse racing, blood sports and prizefighting'.[55] At Rugby, however, Tom learns from the example of Arnold – who takes on the role of father to the students *in loco parentis* – to position himself in opposition to this kind of behaviour. Arnold's quest to instil in Tom a love of 'whatsoever is true, and manly, and lovely, and of good report' (p.167), and therefore to send forth into the community a youth who 'might be a man and do a man's work' (p.317), parallels a larger effort by mid-century educational reformers to try to find 'a middle way between male combativeness and Evangelical Christian piety.'[56] To this end, the masculine ideal that Arnold represents in the novel is often couched in a two-pronged rhetoric of Evangelical awe and the more militaristic parallel with Caesar as a great general and leader of men. During his final days at Rugby, for instance, Tom realises the extent to which Doctor Arnold has been an active force in shaping his identity and helping him on the path to manhood. His feelings at first resemble quasi-religious admiration for a God-like Arnold, who 'watched over every step of [their] school lives' (p.365). Yet Tom's conversion into a 'hero-worshipper, who would have satisfied the soul of Thomas Carlyle himself' (p.367) is also framed as a military victory for Arnold, 'complete from that moment over Tom Brown at any rate. [Tom] gave way at all points, and the enemy marched right over him,– cavalry, infantry, and artillery, and the land transport corps, and the camp followers' (p.366). Later the metaphor takes on a more imperial tone, as Tom agrees heartily with the Master's musing that Arnold's own microcosmic empire of Rugby school is 'the only little corner of the British Empire which is thoroughly, wisely, and strongly ruled just now' (p.355). Thus, although the Caesar

[55] Jeffrey Richards, *Happiest Days: The Public Schools in English Fiction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988). See also Holt, pp.24-26 for more on Regency styles of masculinity and the socio-economic factors which contributed to 'a type of masculine identity that found expression in social disruption and violence' (p.25).
[56] Holt, p.73.

parallel might not seem immediately relevant for articulations of a less combative, more self-restrained model of manliness in which fighting is transformed from a physical act to an ideological resistance of evil,[57] it does capture effectively the perceived authority of Arnold both in the novel and, metatextually, in broader discourses on education. Though he might consider himself a *nullus*, Arnold, by fulfilling the demands of a new kind of muscular Christian manhood, and by guiding the boys in their development of adult male identities, becomes a Caesar in their eyes. Likewise, when former pupils like Hughes and Stanley come to write him into history, Arnold becomes a Caesar, or a paragon of heroic masculinity in the wider world, to which a new generation of male readers will be exposed, and against whom that generation will measure and style their own manliness. Having been exposed to a range of Roman models in their childhoods and having learned to conceptualize masculine authority according to classical parallels, boys like Thomas Hughes therefore went on to assert their own notions of masculinity in writing by using the same framework of shared classical references gained during their formative years at school. They go on to sing the praises of Arnold in much the same way that Horace and Catullus sang the praises of the Caesars they served. In asserting their authority as points of reception, each staking a claim to the authority to arbitrate conceptions of manliness by writing texts designed to shape the masculinity of young readers, and conditioning the way that later generations would receive and interpret the legacy of men like Arnold, Hughes and others herald their own literary manliness through the act of writing. Once again, we find the hero and the bard locked together in Victorian formulations of manliness, with classical and particularly Latin learning underpinning articulations of both forms of elite masculinity.

[57] See Sussman, pp.1-66 for more on the resculpting of masculine values in *Tom Brown*.

1.2 Beasts Without Background: Classics and Industrial Manhood

I have been describing the two most prominent styles of masculine identity as constructed and endorsed in nineteenth-century schoolboy fiction, and the underpinning of those ideals with elite educational experiences. Classical learning formed the cornerstone of elite education in Britain from as early as the middle ages until well into the twentieth century. Yet the Victorian era also witnessed the fragmentation of conventional models of elite masculinity at an unprecedented rate, as new knowledges and professions afforded status on very different grounds in an increasingly industrialised and professionalised society. Consequently, there emerged a growing public debate about the purpose and relevance of a classical education for boys who were likely to become captains of science and industry.

Although legislation such as the Grammar Schools Act of 1840 expanded the mandate of Britain's schools to include the teaching of science and literature, the curriculum remained overwhelmingly classical. Evidence from the report of the Clarendon Commission in the 1860s shows that, of the twenty classes which made up an average weekly timetable, eleven were classics, three were mathematics, and there were two each of modern languages, natural sciences and music or drawing.[58] It is hardly surprising, then, that the captains of science and industry expressed frustration that the classics were of little use in the forging of professional identities. Writing about his experiences at a traditional 'Latin School', Charles Darwin noted:

> Nothing could have been worse for the development of my mind than Dr Butler's school, as it was strictly classical, nothing else being taught, except a little ancient geography and history. The school as a means of education to me was simply a blank.[59]

[58] Cited in Christopher Stray, *Classics Transformed*, p.185.
[59] Charles Darwin, *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin* (London: Bibliolis, 2010), pp.13-14.

Darwin's feelings about the apparent irrelevance of classical education to the lives of professional men is an opinion shared, to varying degrees, by the protagonists of Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1854). The novel features a range of masculine 'types', including the gentlemanly Henry Lennox, the pious Mr Hale, and the industrialist John Thornton. The plot hinges on the question of which man Margaret Hale will choose to ally herself with. When Margaret, who has lived all her life as a clergyman's daughter, learns that her father is to tutor John Thornton in ancient languages, she is full of scorn for the idea. 'What in the world do manufacturers want with the classics, or literature, or the accomplishments of a gentleman?'[60] she asks. The thought of an industrialist wishing to learn the texts and references which, in her world, cement a man's place as a 'gentleman' in the eyes of fashionable society, seems incongruous to Margaret, who has no notion of the masculine skills and knowledges demanded by an industrial community. Thornton is quick to explain these demands to her at an early meeting. 'Some sixteen years ago' he says, 'my father died under very miserable circumstances. I was taken from school, and had to become a man (as well as I could) in a few days.'[61] Yet he, like Darwin, considers himself to be a different and superior kind of man, shaped by hard work and 'self-denial', and possessing a thoroughly practical 'knowledge of goods'[62] and finances. Speaking of his school experience he tells Mr Hale:

> I dare say, I was even considered a pretty fair classic in those days [...] But I ask you, what preparation were they for such a life as I had to lead? None at all. Utterly none at all. On the point of education, any man who can read and write starts fair with me in the amount of really useful knowledge that I had at that time.[63]

Given that such practical knowledge has allowed him to build his business, elevate his standing in the community and support his family, Thornton is keen to downplay the

[60] Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South* (London: Penguin, 2011), p.40.
[61] Gaskell, p.85.
[62] Gaskell, p. 85.
[63] Gaskell, p.86.

importance of the classics in the narrative of his own progress towards maturity and masculinity.

Yet the seemingly antagonistic relationship between Victorian industrial manhood and the more traditional, classically-informed models of manliness was not as straightforward a case of opposition as Darwin and others would have us believe. For men whose fortunes had come from industry and science, but who sought to cement their status as gentlemen in Victorian society, the centrality and significance of classical learning to elite male identities meant that classics remained a reliable means of validating their gentlemanly status. It is, in fact, the very route taken by Gaskell's Thornton who, having raised himself to a position of relative prosperity and security, seeks to consolidate his place among the upper middle classes. He explains of his youthful encounters with epic poetry that: 'I was too busy to think about any dead people, with the living pressing alongside of me, neck to neck, in the struggle for bread', but 'Now that I have my mother safe in the quiet peace that becomes her age, and duly rewards her former exertions, I can turn to all that old narration and thoroughly enjoy it.'[64] Classical learning is desirable, even enjoyable, for its reassuring, legitimizing effect, which serves to validate Thornton's position won through hard work and industriousness: it constitutes cultural capital to compliment economic success. Accordingly, Thornton is a literary manifestation of a broader social phenomenon described by Christopher Stray. Stray identifies extensions of the franchise and the increased intervention of the state in the education system as factors contributing to a situation whereby increasing numbers of middle and lower-middle class groups sought to crystallize their sense of enfranchisement and elevated status through access to classical learning. 'Classics symbolized the status which new middle-class groups

[64] Gaskell, p.86.

wanted.' He goes on: 'Successive waves of aspirant social groups seeking status through education […] secured the retention of a classical dominance in the curriculum.'[65]

It is through precisely this channel of classical education that characters such as Mr Osborne in *Vanity Fair* (1848) and Sir Hugo Mallinger in *Daniel Deronda* (1876) attempt to secure gentlemanly professions for their socially indeterminate dependants – Georgie and Daniel respectively. Mallinger openly admits to Daniel that learning classical languages is by no means an end in itself, nor is such knowledge particularly relevant to the lived realities of the majority of elite men:

> The truth is, unless a man can get the prestige and income of a Don and write donnish books, it's hardly worth while for him to make a Greek and Latin machine of himself and be able to spin you out pages of the Greek dramatists at any verse you'll give him as a cue. That's all very fine, but in practical life nobody does give you the cue for pages of Greek.[66]

However, and particularly for a youth of dubious birth and background, a classical education is 'a passport in life' which will allow Daniel access to Cambridge, to elite connections and social networks, and from there to prestigious careers in the masculine public sphere. Mallinger explains: 'You might make yourself a barrister—be a writer—take up politics. I confess that is what would please me best.'[67] Thus, despite the justifiable protestations of Darwin and others about the relevance of a classical education to the modern man of science or industry, such an education actually became increasingly valuable as a matter of masculine status, and as a point of continuity amongst ever more pluralistic and fragmented masculine identities. As David Cody has noted: 'by the latter part of the century, it was almost universally accepted that the recipient of a traditional liberal education based largely on Latin at one of the elite public schools — Eton, Harrow,

[65] Stray, *Classics Transformed*, p.180.
[66] George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (London: Penguin, 2011), p.177.
[67] Eliot, p.177.

Rugby, and so on — would be recognized as a gentleman, no matter what his origins had been.'[68]

One of the most vehement, even vitriolic assertions of the continued significance of the classics for constructions of manliness comes, perhaps inevitably given his own profession, from Mr King in Kipling's *Stalky and Co.* During a lesson on Horace, King insists upon the merits of a classical education over the kind of scientific training that Darwin and Thornton advocate. 'Do you believe that your modern system of inculcating unrelated facts about chlorine, for instance, all of which may be proved fallacies by the time the boys grow up, can have any real bearing on education…?' (p.173) Rather, he continues, it is in the 'grammar and Latinity…of, we'll say, one Ode of Horace, one twenty lines of Virgil' which provides boys with a perfect example of 'Balance, proportion, perspective – life. Your scientific man is the unrelated animal – the beast without background' (p.173). King's use of the word 'beast' to describe the Victorian man of science is significant here and emphasises the extent to which debates about educational approaches were inextricably bound up with anxieties about masculinity. The word is used more than sixty times throughout the stories, usually as an insult by the boys themselves to ridicule and reject certain immature or unmanly behaviours from their peers. It is used on several occasions as a slur against Beetle who, unlike the other boys, is not athletic or destined for a career in the military, and whose 'beastliness' is said to have 'soul-corrupting consequences' (p.111) both for his peers and for the nation they will one day serve.[69] Drawing on the dual associations of 'beastly' as both a cultural want of civilization and a carnal appetite for base or animalistic (or, as it is implied in the text, for homosexual)[70] desires, the Latin master's use of the term validates a narrative of failed or impaired

[68] David Cody, 'The Gentleman', *Victorian Web* < http://www.victorianweb.org/history/Gentleman.html> [accessed 21/05/14].
[69] See also Carolyn Oulton, *'Ain't goin' to have any beastly Erickin': The Problem of Male Friendship in Stalky and Co.* (2007), <http://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/rg_kent_oulton.htm> [accessed 30 June 2014].
[70] "beastly, adj.", OED Online, June 2014 (Oxford University Press) <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/16601?rskey=mnnSSK&result=1> [accessed 30 June, 2014].

manliness in those who lack the correct educational 'background'. Such a man lacks sufficient training in the languages, literatures and narratives of a British cultural heritage which claims ancient Greece and Rome as its oldest and most venerable ancestors. According to King's stance, firmly in the classical camp of what Emily McDermott calls 'the curricular battle being fought […] between the "ancient" and "modern sides"',[71] such a man is not qualified to take his place as a dominant point of reception. Nor can he speak for and on behalf of an elite male society that policed its own boundaries by means of shared classical knowledges.

Ultimately, then, Victorian discourses about masculinity remained inextricably interconnected with classical learning throughout the century, both in practical terms of how to train boys into men in an increasingly industrialised age, but also in a broader cultural sense which is deeply concerned with questions of reading and reception. As we have seen here with the antagonisms between conventional elite masculinity and competing forms of industrial manhood (and as I shall continue to demonstrate in the remaining chapters of this thesis) the meaning of Rome was rarely uncontested or uncomplicated, but equally it was never unimportant for Victorian codifications of masculinity. In this context it is perhaps to be expected that schoolboy fictions should feature so many attempts by teachers and other senior figures to intervene in their students' reading, and thereby to condition boys' understandings and receptions of a past as vast, multifaceted and often problematic as Rome. The intended result of such coached readings was, almost without exception, to sanction particular gender ideals, endorsing particular behaviours and ideologies whilst withdrawing that endorsement from others. In the same way that guidebooks for young readers insisted on a moral imperative in children's stories, so too do the Latin masters of schoolboy fiction insist on inculcating a version of Rome which was

[71] Emily A. McDermott, 'Playing for His Side: Kipling's 'Regulus', Corporal Punishment, and Classical Education', *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* , 15 (September 2008), pp.369-392 (p.370).

designed to foster elite masculine virtues. In the case of Kipling's Mr King, this sanctioned style of manliness is very clearly a New Imperialist model closely akin to and perhaps even derived from Horace's warrior figure. I suggest, however, that Kipling's novel more broadly, whilst certainly celebrating the notion of the imperial boy, is also deeply sceptical about this determined monolithic indoctrination of boys via classical models. Rather, I argue that the text supports a reading of elite masculinity which is more pluralistic than the gender ideals promulgated by King, and that, as in Horace, the Man of Letters emerges as an equal, if not a superior, to the conventional warrior figure of New Imperialism.

1.3 'Regulus' and the Victorian Man of Letters

In *Stalky and Co.*, the chapter entitled 'Regulus' finds the Latin Master, Mr King, walking the boys through a lesson on Horace's fifthOde (book III, poem 5), in which is described the fate of the Roman general of the title. As T.J. Leary has noted, it is an episode very much concerned with how boys come to recognize masculine qualities in themselves and in each other through guided interpretation of classical texts.[72] Regulus was a commander and consul during the First Punic War (250 BC). After many successful battles against the Carthaginian forces, he was eventually defeated at the Battle of Tunis, taken prisoner and sent to Rome to negotiate a cessation of hostilities or a prisoner exchange. In an extraordinary display of valour and patriotism, Regulus asks his fellow countrymen to reject Carthage's proposals and continue the war. He then returns to Carthage to be put to death.[73] It is a tale of military valour and self-sacrifice in the name of one's comrades, country and empire, and the structure of Kipling's story emphasises that it is through

[72] T.J. Leary, 'Kipling, Stalky, Regulus and Co.: A Reading of Horace Odes 3.5', *Greece & Rome*, 55 (2008), pp.247-262 (esp. p.252). For more on the influence of Horace see Julia Haig Gaisser, 'The Roman Odes at School: The Rise of Imperial Horace', *The Classical World*, 87 (1994), pp.443-456; Vance, *The Victorians and Ancient Rome*, pp.175-194. Though it was not published until 1917, Carrington and others have shown that Kipling's 'Regulus' was probably written much earlier and circulated amongst Kipling's friends. See C. Carrington ed. *Kipling's Horace* (London: Methuen, 1978), xix.

[73] The legend of Regulus's death is included in Horace's Ode III.5 in and Diodorus Siculus XXIV.12, though it is notably absent from Polybius.

exposure to this kind of Roman narrative that the boys of the Coll. learn to recognise such virtues in one another.

The first half of the story takes the form of an extended, comical reconstruction of a schoolroom Latin class. Kipling replicates for several pages the stilted speech patterns of the students as they translate the original text line by line and suffer sarcastic put-downs from Mr King for their efforts. In the second half, Kipling draws a parallel between Regulus and Winton, a senior pupil at the Coll. who releases a mouse during a drawing lesson and, as punishment, is sentenced to write out five hundred lines of Virgil. The task will keep Winton from attending football practice, an absence which carries its own punishment of 'not less than three strokes with a ground-ash from the Captain of Games, generally a youth between seventeen and eighteen years, rarely under eleven stone' (p.167). Though Winton's team-mates arrive in force to try to have him spared the flogging, he refuses their help, even beating off the boys who would intervene, and accepts his punishment. He is rewarded in the end with an official place on the first fifteen.

Yet the final denouement is not so much Winton's victory as the exchange which happens between Stalky and Winton in the closing lines. As the two are parting ways for the evening, Stalky calls out ''Night, Regulus,' prompting an amazed Mr King to marvel: 'You see. It sticks. A little of it sticks amongst the barbarians' (p.179). This, Kipling reminds us, is a story about the inculcation of specific masculine ideals through targeted teaching of classical examples. It is an inculcation which takes place across several levels. Not only do the stories of great Romans provide positive examples of 'inspiring examples of patriotism and public spirit'[74] for boys to admire and emulate in their future careers, but Rome is also encoded at a semantic level, supplying boys quite literally with the words through which to understand and express masculine ideality. The ideal which King seeks to foster in his pupils is that of New Imperialist duty, to the determined exclusion of other

[74] Montefiore, p.114.

incongruous or competing models of Victorian manhood. Consequently, King tries to eradicate language and ideas which have no place in New Imperialist formulations of manliness. He is particularly troubled by an apparent want of manliness in Beetle's rendering of Latin into English. When Beetle translates *conjuge barba* as 'barbarous spouse', King retorts with 'Why do you select *that* disgustful equivalent out of all the dictionary? [...] Isn't "wife" good enough for you?' (p.158). King's disapproval of Beetle's over-wrought, affected language in the word 'spouse' is no doubt informed by contemporary anxieties about the decadence movement in late-Victorian culture. As I will describe in chapter four, decadent literature was characterised by ornate descriptions and ostensibly immoral themes designed to evoke the experience of heightened aesthetic pleasure. Decadent writers also laid bold claim to the more illicit or disturbing aspects of the Roman parallel, such as the legacy of the emperor Nero, to construct a style of masculinity which was rooted in affectation and artistry, and which constituted a direct challenge to New Imperialist receptions of antiquity. Critics of the movement cited this unhealthy or unmanly preoccupation with affectation as grounds for condemning decadence as a symptom of failed or perverse masculinity. In this context, Beetle's use of the word 'spouse' over the plainer (and gender-specific) 'wife', suggests unmanliness and even effeminacy in King's eyes. As Montefiore observes: 'In demanding accurate, elegant language from his reluctant pupils, even if he doesn't get it, the schoolmaster King is not just coaching them for exams; he is teaching them moral and cultural values.'[75] The disruption Beetle causes to that steady indoctrination of such values prompts the Latin master to stage an even more direct intervention in the boys' interpretation of Rome: 'Horace was a flâneur – a man about town,' he tells the class; 'Avoid such men' (p.161).

It is not only decadent manliness which King teaches the boys to reject through the story of Regulus, but also the kind of industrial manhood whose supporters he has

[75] Montefiore, p.118.

previously dismissed as 'beasts without background.' When asked about Regulus's captors, King describes Carthage as 'a sort of God-forsaken nigger Manchester' (p.161). In chapter two of this thesis we find the Carthage parallel deployed by both Britain and France in an attempt by each side to claim cultural and military superiority during the Napoleonic Wars. Here, though, the comparison is levelled against competing models of masculinity within Britain. It is a parallel which is not only strikingly racist, but which transposes the racial hierarchies at the heart of imperialist ideology onto all-white groups at home. King's message is brutally clear: the New Imperialist is culturally and physically superior to the industrialist of Britain's factory towns, and Rome offers narratives through which this superiority can be articulated.

However, I argue that the model of straightforward indoctrination that Kipling depicts is not entirely without its problems, nor indeed does the novel endorse such a monolithic inculcation of masculine values from readings of ancient Roman texts. As Montefiore has noted: 'The identification which "Regulus" proposes between the modern schoolboy and the Roman general becomes shaky when looked at closely. Winton, unlike Regulus, is not only in the wrong, but distinctly unheroic.'[76] Furthermore, the compiled stories bear out a larger condemnation of King's methods of indoctrination. In 'The Propagation of Knowledge', the class are being taught Shakespeare – a particular favourite of Mr King. When M'Turk suggests that Shakespeare did not write his own plays, King is furious and remonstrates the Irish-born M'Turk with another Roman parallel: 'If the Romans had dealt faithfully with the Celt, *ab initio*, this would never have happened' (p.237), he cries. The external examiner, however, is a subscriber to conspiracy theories about the identity of Shakespeare and it swiftly becomes apparent that, had the boys listened only to King's lessons, they would all have scored poorly in their final exams. Instead, their salvation comes via Beetle, who is portrayed as being physically weak with

[76] Montefiore, p.120.

poor vision, and is the victim of persistent bullying from the Latin master. He is a far cry from the hardy, physical robustness of the New Imperialist but does, I suggest, embody a different and equally heroic masculine ideal – the Man of Letters.

The masculine identity of the Man of Letters is rooted in the act of writing. To enter into the public literary sphere signifies mature masculinity in the schoolboy novels, but also in wider nineteenth-century discourse on the Man of Letters. It implies that a man has mastered the languages, narratives, and predominantly classical references which underwrote elite male identities at an individual and collective level. He is equipped to claim a place in a British cultural tradition by both adopting and embodying the dominant point of reception, influencing how pasts such as ancient Rome will be used to articulate contemporary values, reinforce socio-cultural hierarchies, and to frame conflict. Furthermore, his words will represent the spirit of his own age to future generations.

Having been subjected to a vigorous educational regime from infancy, the young John Stuart Mill was keen to assert his manliness and maturity through precisely this process of writing and authorship. A precocious child, Mill's first attempt at writing came between the ages of eight and twelve, and in the form of 'no less than a History of the Roman Government, compiled (with the assurances of Hooke) from Livy and Dionysus.'[77] The choice of Rome as subject matter further reflects Mill's desire to take his place as a mature Man of Letters, capable of translating and assigning meaning to the Roman past which was so central to Britain's cultural identity. Only the adult Mill, the *bona fide* Man of Letters, is able to recognise his younger attempts at writing as 'the merest rubbish' though useful, nonetheless, for 'acquir[ing] readiness of expression'[78] which will serve him in adult life.

Yet Mill's premature attempts to assert his own manliness are less misguided than those of many pupils of schoolboy fiction, who attempt to perform manliness via a series

[77] Mill, *Autobiography*, p.14.
[78] Mill, *Autobiography*, p.16.

of props and behaviours, without understanding its essence. Smoking, gambling, drinking and growing whiskers are among the main activities through which boys like Tom Brown and Eric erroneously attempt to signal their maturity. Tom Brown and his friends adopt the practise of 'smoking, not for pleasure, but because they are now gentlemen at large – and this is the most correct public method of notifying the fact' (p.158). Eric too succumbs to the temptations of smoking because he has 'a confused notion that there was something "manly" in it.' When he learns that smoking is, in fact, incompatible with muscular Christian ideals of manliness, he gives up the habit and finds that 'with the cigar, he seemed to have flung away the affected manner he displayed just before.'[79] In *Stalky and Co.*, older boys Sefton and Campbell mistakenly interpret the signs of puberty and physical maturity as cultural manhood. They are described as 'precocious, hairy youths' whose 'moustaches were beyond question impressive' (p.125). Their misguided show of manliness comes to nothing, however, when Stalky and his friends beat the boys into submission and 'Sefton cried like a twelve-year-old with pain, shame, wounded vanity and utter helplessness' (p.132). It is through episodes like these that the stories are able to sanction certain masculine traits and reject others, depending on the style of adult manliness each author is seeking to idealise and foster in young readers.

At a metafictional level, however, it is the written word and the act of writing which retain the highest authority in the text, even over other styles of masculinity which the plots of schoolboy fiction might appear to valorise more highly than that of the Man of Letters. By producing texts, the Man of Letters contributes to the literary heteroglossia of his own day, feeding back into that cycle of reading and writing by which elite Victorian boys became men, and thereby asserting the continued power of his own values and ideologies in that process. As Habermas insists: 'Language is not only a medium of

[79] Farrar, *Eric*, pp.101;102.

communication; it is also a medium of domination and social power'[80] and in this instance, I suggest, of masculine power. Thus do we find time and again in schoolboy fiction an equivalency between writing and fighting as signifiers of manliness, and means by which boys could assert masculine dominance. Boys become men when they are ready to write or fight. It is a paralleling of the terms of masculine combativeness and conflict which dates back to Horace and a long tradition of classical literature, and one which Herbert Sussman has also identified in the rhetoric of the Victorian literary marketplace, where commercial success was considered to demarcate manliness and could, in turn, be 'tested against other men.'[81]

Thus, although schoolboy fictions often sanction very overtly a particular style of ideal manliness – Muscular Christianity in the case of *Eric* and *Tom* Brown and New Imperialism in *Stalky and Co* – the equivalency between these ideal models of manliness and acts of writing is consistent throughout. Farrar's *Eric,* for instance, is ultimately a story of failed manliness, but the final chapter sees Eric's schoolmates, now grown into men, lamenting the loss of one who could have become a great man of letters. The chapter begins with the narrator recounting a meeting with 'two old Roslyn fellows, Wildney and Upton, the latter of whom is now Captain Upton […] and there are not two finer or manlier officers in the whole service.' Another of the boys, we are told, is 'making a great start at the bar.'[82] However, the conversation soon turns to their late friend Eric and one of the men produces some verses that Eric wrote during his final months in which he had run away from Roslyn school. The verses constitute the final moment of pathos in the novel, since they reveal great literary promise in a boy whose journey towards manhood was cut short. '[T]here was *one* who would have been the pride of Roslyn had he lived'.[83] In the

[80] Cited in Kenneth Haynes, 'Text, Theory, and Reception', in *Classics and the Uses of Reception*, ed. by Charles Martindale and Richard F. Thomas (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp.44-54 (p.46).
[81] Sussman, p.81.
[82] Farrar, *Eric*, pp.265; 265-266.
[83] Farrar, *Eric*, p.266.

age of Carlyle's Man of Letters, it seems Eric's literary endeavours would have equalled or even excelled the feats of his comrades in the military or judiciary.

Yet it is Kipling's *Stalky and Co,* which offers the most powerful example of the Man of Letters as a masculine ideal, and of the interconnectedness of this ideal, as per the Horatian example, with the New Imperialist. At school Stalky himself epitomises New Imperialist values, excelling in all aspects of sport, strategy, physical robustness, and leadership which mark him out as a 'general' and a 'Great man' (p.13) among his schoolmates. The stories are also compiled in such a way as to emphasise the extent to which Stalky fulfils his destiny of imperial manliness. Where the first thirteen stories are set in the Coll. and follow Stalky in his childhood adventures, the final tale entitled 'Slaves of the Lamp, II', is set fifteen years later. The boys, now grown to manhood, confirm Stalky's manliness by hailing him in his absence as 'the great man of his Century' (p.281).[84] They are gathered at a country house, revelling in one another's company and reminiscing about years spent in the empire. Not content with the domestic setting and the prospect of marriage, the men yearn for 'the quick scene-shifting of India – a dinner, camp, or a race meeting here and there; a dak-bungalow or railway station' (p.280); imperial, homosocial spaces wherein they might more easily style themselves and be recognised according to the signifiers of imperial manhood learned in childhood at the Coll. Stalky, however, is not present. Instead we hear tales of his victories in the mountains of Nepal, where he has come to be recognised as a hero amongst his troops and as a kind of demi-god by the local villagers. Stalky's superior brand of imperial masculinity comes from acts of great daring and military prowess, made possible by his uncanny ability to assimilate linguistic and cultural signifiers. Not only has he mastered the Latin language, gaining access to Sandhurst and to training in the military skills required of a soldier, but he has become fluent in the languages of the east and has great 'knowledge of Oriental nature'

[84] The 1899 edition of *Stalky and Co*, published by Macmillan, consisted of nine stories, with 'Stalky', 'Regulus', 'The United Idolators' and 'The Propagation of Knowledge' added later. *The Complete Stalky and Co.,* as it exists today, was compiled and published in 1929.

(p.288). Tertius recalls how, in India, Stalky 'jabbered Pushtu and Punjabi in alternate streaks' (p.288) and asserts that 'Stalky *is* a Sikh' (p.283), owing to his adopting of Sikh customs of speech, dress and prayer which have won him the admiration of his troops. Stalky has repeated in the east, and with even greater success, the same process of masculine identity/authority formation which boys underwent at school. By assimilating the necessary accoutrements of authority amongst the eastern races of empire, Stalky becomes a god in their eyes, 'sitting on the one chair of state with half the population grovellin' before him' (p.296). He is also able to use his extensive knowledge of local beliefs to outwit his enemies and win victory in battle. While he and his men are besieged in a fort high in the mountains, Stalky covers a hidden escape route with a human corpse in the knowledge that 'the Sikhs wouldn't go near the place' (p.286) on religious grounds. He is in many ways depicted as a hero to rival Achilles, Alexander, or Aeneas in military might.

Yet, not unlike these classical heroes, Stalky's long years spent in harsh conditions, as well as his exposure to so many non-English speech types and ideologies, have rendered his masculinity so extreme that it cannot exist within the socio-ideological confines of England.[85] He has attained the heights of New Imperialist ideality only to surpass them, becoming almost frighteningly hypermasculine. While the other boys return to England at the end of their service, Stalky blockades himself in the harsh mountain regions of enemy terrain, allowing himself and his Sikh troops to be cut off by winter snows. The thought of him 'let loose on the south side of Europe with a sufficiency of Sikhs and a reasonable prospect of loot,' (p.296) is a humorous thought for the men, but also a deeply unsettling one in terms of Victorian social and gender ideals. The extreme New Imperialist manliness which Stalky embodies is heroic when contained within the mountains of far-off places and within the ideological framework of service to the British Empire, but it becomes

[85] Stalky's extreme masculinity has led critics like Matthew Grenby to compare his portrayal to that of Kurtz in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899). See M.O. Grenby, *Children's Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), p.103.

unstable and untenable when transposed back into British society. Stalky's style of masculinity, it seems, is not quite the perfect, aspirational manliness it first appears. Certainly, Kipling implies, the British Empire cannot function served only by Stalkies or by a rigidly monolithic model of imperial manliness. Imperial manliness needs its counterpoint in the Man of Letters – the bard who will chronicle the deeds of the imperial male whilst also ensuring the transmission of masculine knowledge and values to new generations. And in *Stalky and Co,* this figure is Beetle.

Beetle's literary learning gives him a standing among his peers that he could never hope to achieve through feats of strength alone. As a reward for his diligence in literary study he is granted 'the run of [the Head's] brown-bound, tobacco-scented library; prohibiting nothing' (p.259). It is as a result of this privileged access to and assimilation of literary texts that Beetle is able to save the rest of the boys in their school exams. By disseminating amongst his friends bibliographic details of authors he has read, as well as circulating the theories that Shakespeare may not have written his own plays, he is able to prepare the class for their *viva voce* examination and to impress the examiner with theories which King had refused to teach them. When his classmates are preparing to graduate to prestigious military academies, Beetle has already achieved some measure of status and influence over them as author and editor of the school magazine. He has learned to wield a pen in the same way his schoolmates will learn to wield weapons.

It is only in the final chapter that we learn the full extent of Beetle's success in becoming a Man of Letters. Beetle, who has been referred to in the third person throughout the novel, now refers to himself in the first person.[86] The reader is forced to re-evaluate the portrayal of the characters in light of this revelation that Beetle has been the narrator the entire time. However mighty his contemporaries might be as soldiers, ultimate authority over how they are presented to a wider world, and how their deeds and manly qualities are

[86] See Kipling, p.279: 'I knew when a troopship was in port by Infant's invitations.'

inscribed into the imagined historical record of Kipling's novel, lies with Beetle. The novel is transformed into a case study of the message found in Horace's third ode: a man may be heroic in battle, but such militaristic masculinity is dependent for its survival upon the literary man. In a novel which seems to sing the victories of Stalky, we are told in the closing paragraphs that 'India's full of Stalkies – Cheltenham and Heileybury and Marlborough chaps – that we don't know anything about' (p.296). The only difference between Stalky and these anonymous men is that Stalky is privileged to have had his deeds recorded in writing by the Man of Letters, who will ensure that they will be remembered by future generations, and aspired to by new generations of boys on the path to manhood. If Stalky is presented as a physical, military hero after the fashion of Achilles or Aeneas, then Beetle casts himself as a Homer or a Virgil – a singer of heroes without whom heroes could not exist in a text-based culture. 'Ain't I responsible for the whole thing?' Beetle asks in the closing lines. When challenged to 'Prove it' by his comrades, Beetle declares triumphantly 'And I have!' (p.297) in reference to the book which, with those lines, the reader has just finished reading.

In his portrayal of Stalky as a New Imperialist and his far more subtle, though equally heroic, depiction of Beetle as a Man of Letters, Kipling not only offers a Victorian update on the Horatian ideals of the warrior and the bard, but emphasises the extent to which both are necessary to the success and security of the empire. In opposition to the careful supervision, and even attempted indoctrination of boys under the public school system – which sought to steer boys through the more problematic aspects of the Roman legacy and to foster monolithic notions of masculine ideality – Kipling celebrates plurality, at least within broader conceptions of 'elite' manliness. For British boys grown into men, Roman parallels learned in childhood not only functioned as a shared network of references with which to cement collective notions of elite identity, but they could also be used to frame variations, and often competing variations, within that bracket. The

remaining chapters of this thesis examine in more detail these variant models of manliness, from non-violent political masculinity to fin-de-siècle decadent identities, to demonstrate the extent to which Rome was firmly entrenched at the heart of Victorian codifications of masculinity.

Chapter Two

Reforming Romans: Political Masculinity in the Age of Reform

> 'Ancient history might be related in such a manner as to furnish not only allusions to school boys, but important lessons to statesmen.'
>
> - Thomas Macaulay[87]

If the schoolroom was a space in which Victorian boys were exposed to the history and literature of ancient Rome, and taught to wield its words like weapons in defence of the boundaries of elite male culture, then the political arena would seem the most natural place to look for evidence of Rome's continued significance as a symbol of masculine identity and authority. A homosocial space, often likened to a gentleman's club, the halls of Westminster in the first half of the nineteenth century were populated by men who had shared similar educational experiences, and who could therefore draw from the same reserves of classical references to frame all manner of political conflict and allegiance. It is striking, then, that uses of Rome for articulating national values, synthesizing the public image of statesmen, and constructing partisan ideologies should fluctuate so dramatically between enthusiastic adoption and outright rejection over the course of the nineteenth century. This chapter accounts for such uneasy, almost schizophrenic receptions of ancient Rome in Victorian political discourse by setting them in the wider context of Anglo-French tensions. French revolutionary and Napoleonic uses of Rome are crucial for explaining, firstly, the very direct engagement of British political commentators with the Roman past immediately after Waterloo, as they sought to detach Rome from associations of revolution, radical republicanism and violent popular protest; and secondly, the

[87] Macaulay, 'History', p.272.

abandonment of such strategies in the period leading up to the Reform Act of 1832, as the Roman parallel became contested and unstable, with rival factions laying claim to the same Roman past to articulate conflicting and often politically incendiary ideologies. The result was a reluctance among moderate statesmen of the 1830s to draw on Roman parallels in political contexts. It was an evasion which speaks volumes about socio-political tensions in a Britain facing the internal threat of radical agitation, shifts in the balance of power between patrician and plebeian, and subsequent anxieties about what it meant to be a man and a gentleman in such times. In the years between Waterloo and the Reform Act, whilst Greece rose to prominence as a cultural ideal precisely because it was *unlike* Britain in its public and social institutions, Rome was omitted from political discourse – with one or two very notable exceptions – not because it was irrelevant, but because it was too familiar, too full of narratives and characters that illustrated the dangers of political error.

The consequences of such uneasy receptions for articulations of political manliness are traceable even as late as the 1860s and 1870s. Indeed, the hesitation of the political establishment to re-engage with the Roman past was particularly frustrating for Anthony Trollope, whose Palliser novels and volumes on Caesar and Cicero appeared at a time of renewed debate about the scale and speed of further political reform, the regrouping of Napoleonic dynastic identity in France, and the publication of Louis Napoleon's *Life of Caesar* (1865), which Trollope himself reviewed. In the final part of this chapter, I suggest that Trollope attempted to reassert the relevance of the Roman parallel in British political discourse. In particular, he utilized Caesar and Cicero as ciphers to articulate partisan ideologies and the masculine ideals associated with Liberal and Conservative statesmen respectively.

2.1 Ancient Rome in Post-Waterloo Britain

In his posthumously-published work *Illuminations,* Walter Benjamin observed that 'to Robespierre ancient Rome was a past charged with the time of the now which he blasted out of the continuum of history. The French Revolution viewed itself as Rome incarnate.'[88] For the revolutionaries, like Napoleon after them, the ancient Roman past supplied models and narratives which could be used to rewrite the scripts of political authority in the present. Popular protest, radical (even violent) regime change, and altered ideas about the rights and civic duties of man-as-citizen, could be infused with an air of legitimacy according to a long-established classical tradition. Political violence could be framed as a restorative rather than a destructive act.[89] In wake of revolution, then, Britain's political elites found themselves in a difficult position whereby their collective masculine identities, as we have seen in chapter one, were underpinned by the same classical knowledge that had become associated with radical or republican politics during the revolution. Understanding the determined and systematic evocation of ancient Rome by the French in an era when Britain feared the spread of revolutionary violence to her own shores, is therefore a necessary first step to appreciating the uneasy relationship with ancient Rome in British political discourse.

For Robespierre and his contemporaries, it was the Roman Republic which best captured the spirit of the revolution, and its founder Lucius Junius Brutus who embodied its ideal masculine values. Brutus was responsible for the overthrow of Rome's kings and served as first consul in 509BC. The 'Oath of Brutus', as recorded by Livy, held a particular significance for revolutionaries as it speaks of a Roman people 'desirous of a

[88] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. by Hannah Arendt (New York: Harcourt, 1969), p.261.
[89] On the revolutionary uses of ancient Rome see in particular David Wiles, *Theatre and Citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p.150; Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), pp.97-98; Sachs, pp.14-16; Harold T. Parker, *The Cult of Antiquity and the French Revolutionaries* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937).

new liberty'[90] and refusing to allow any man ever to make himself king in the city. This mandate is commonly believed to have been a motivating factor for Brutus's descendant, Marcus Junius, during the latter's assassination of Julius Caesar in 44BC. Robert Herbert states that 'It would be hard to exaggerate the prevalence of Brutus in 1793 and 1794',[91] and certainly the use of the Brutus parallel across a broad range of political, civic and cultural institutions speaks to a determination among the revolutionaries to be seen as liberators after the Roman model. Busts of Brutus were erected in meeting places across France, most notably in the Hall of Spectacles, the venue for the National Convention from 1793. Towns were renamed after the Roman statesman to reflect the support of their populations for the revolution.[92] In the arts, Voltaire's Roman play *Brutus* (1730), which had met with short runs and very limited success in the decades after it was written, was revived with tremendous popular approval after 1790. 'The precepts of liberty expressed by Brutus, pure intellectual concepts for the society of 1730, took on a moving significance for the audiences of 1790,'[93] notes Kevin McKee of the 'clamorous' crowds who arrived to watch the performance and who engaged in partisan brawls at key moments in the drama.

In fine art too, Jacques-Louis David's painting 'The Lictors Returning to Brutus the Bodies of his Sons' was first exhibited at the salon of 1789. The painting shows a grave Brutus seated in shadow in his home, whilst lictors bear in the bodies of his sons, who have proven themselves traitors to their father's cause by supporting King Tarquin. Though he inhabits a domestic space, Brutus is clothed in the toga of public office, suitably dishevelled to reflect the internal anguish he masks beneath his stoical expression. Over his

[90] Livy, 1.59.1.
[91] Robert Herbert, *David, Voltaire, Brutus and the French Revolution*: *An Essay in Art and Politics* (New York: Viking, 1972), p.105. See also Noel Parker, *Portrayals of the Revolution: Images, Debates and Patterns of Thought on the French Revolution* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), pp.84-90; Wiles, pp.148-158.
[92] See Sachs, pp.14-15.
[93] Kevin McKee, 'Voltaire's *Brutus*', *Modern Language Notes,* 52 (1941), pp.100-106 (p.101).

right shoulder stands a statue of Roma and a bundle of fasces[94] – two of the most powerful images of civic duty and political authority known to the Roman world. Over his left, the harsh light of grief floods in from the street, collapsing the boundaries between the public, political world and the domestic one. It falls upon the women of Brutus's house to prepare the bodies and mourn the loss of their sons and husbands. Stylistically, both David's painting and the staging of Voltaire's play (which had been among the first to insist upon historical accuracy by having the lead actors wear togas)[95] broke from aristocratic rococo styles to experiment with a more austere aesthetic consistent with those imagined to have existed in early Rome.[96] The aesthetic choices concerning the treatment of their Roman subjects reinforce still further the populist, anti-monarchic sentiments at the heart of revolutionary ideology and masculinity. All of this amounts to a grave admiration for Brutus's dedication to republican principles and his manly self-possession in bearing the personal consequences of civic duty. David's treatment of this episode acknowledges the cost of citizenship to the individual and the family, though he has concealed the full horrors of political violence by positioning the mutilated bodies behind the statue of Roma.[97] Literally, here, the state is placed before the individual; the citizen before the man.

[94] The fasces were bundles of rods bound around an axe, which were carried by lictors accompanying high-ranking Roman statesmen such as consuls and tribunes. The fasces symbolise the judicial authority of Roman magistrates to impose order and to punish crime or unrest. Etymologically, the fasces are the root of the modern term 'fascism'.

[95] See Fiona Macintosh, 'From Sculpture to Vase-Painting: Archaeological Models for the Actor', in *Performance in Greek and Roman Theatre*, ed. by George W.M. Harrison and Vayos Liapis (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp.517-533 (p.522).

[96] See McKee, pp.100-106.

[97] Early sketches of the work show that David had planned to show the mother reaching out to the heads of her sons, carried by the lictors on pikes. Wiles suggests that the storming of the Bastille and the outbreak of revolutionary violence caused David to rethink the presentation of the bodies and to 'concentrate upon the consequences of moral choice' (p.151).

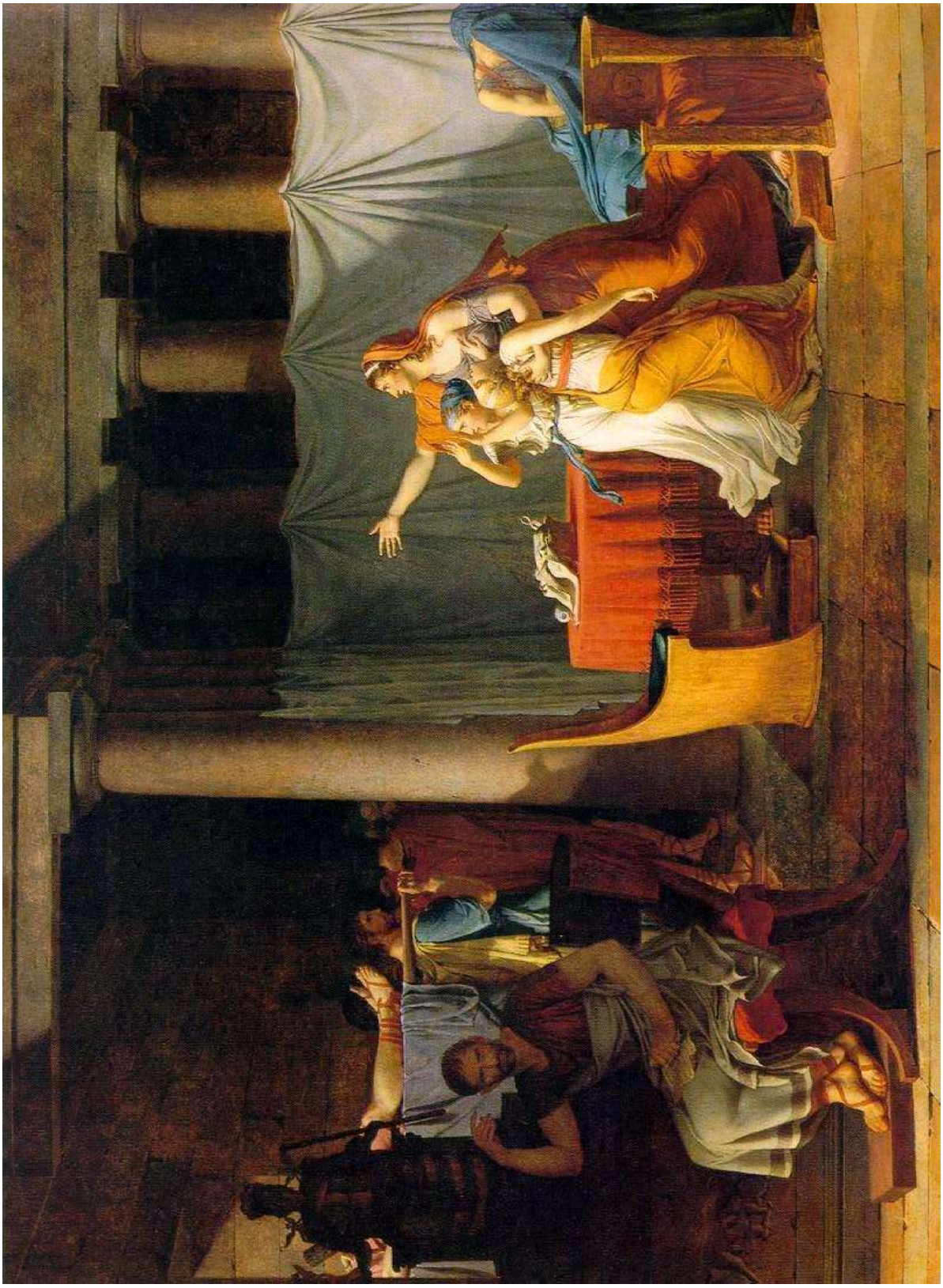

Fig. 1. Jacques-Louis David, ‘The Lictors Returning to Brutus the Bodies of his Sons’, Oil on Canvas (1789) Musée de Louvre, Paris.

By placing republican Rome at the heart of socio-political and aesthetic values, and at the centre of what Keith Baker has called 'a revolutionary lexicon',[98] the revolutionaries accomplished a cultural and linguistic coup as much as a political one. Rome was embedded into the fabric of revolutionary ideology and notions of republican manliness. Yet these ideologies were inherently associated with notions of transformation and transition, of the overthrow of established order, and even the sanctioning of political violence in the name of extending political power to the people. It is hardly surprising in this context that Napoleon Bonaparte, faced with ruling over a state which loathed monarchy, turned from straightforwardly Republican models, and looked towards Augustus and the Principate for narratives with which to consolidate and legitimize his own individual authority.[99] Like Augustus, who had learned from the example of Julius Caesar, Napoleon was careful to ensure that his political offices, such as his consulship-for-life, were awarded through constitutionally sanctioned channels. He also undertook a restructuring of the government according to recognisably Romanesque models, with a tribunate and a senate mandated to debate legislation.[100] In the arts too Napoleon instituted a systematic programme of commissions and acquisitions, which included the purchase of the Borghese collection for an inflated sum; a project to relocate Trajan's column to Paris as a monument to Napoleon's military victories; and numerous works by Canova depicting the imperial family, and executed in classical styles. By styling himself as heir to the Augustan legacy, Napoleon encouraged a cult of personality, codifying himself and the imperial family as embodiments of peace and virtue, and ultimately sanitizing one-man-rule without opposing the republican ideals of the revolution.[101]

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[98] See Keith Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), Part III: 'Towards a Revolutionary Lexicon'.
[99] See Valérie Huet, 'Napoleon I: A New Augustus?' in *Roman Presences: Receptions of Rome in European Culture 1789-1945*, ed. by Catherine Edwards (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp.53-69.
[100] See Huet, p.54.
[101] See Huet, pp.57-66; Martin Lyons, *Napoleon Bonaparte and the Legacy of the French Revolution* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1994), pp. 178-194.

The overt and systematic use of ancient Rome by both Napoleon and the revolutionaries, was not merely intended to articulate social and political ideals in France, but was also deployed to frame Franco-British relations. If France had cast herself as Rome incarnate, then she also sought to present her rival across the channel as a new Carthage – a cultural and military inferior whose historical significance was destined to be obliterated by a greater power. Carthaginian civilization and its values existed in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century imagination largely as the creations of Roman writers like Sallust, Plutarch and Polybius, with Carthage itself being denied the right to self-representation after her final defeat in 146BC. It is hardly surprising, then, that British writers and statesmen should have been so enraged by the comparison. In parliamentary debates concerning Britain's position regarding France, Earl Fitzwilliam fumed that:

> [The French] resort to that well-known and constant allusion of theirs to ancient history, by which representing 'France as modern Rome, and England as modern Carthage,' they accuse us of a national perfidity, and hold England up 'as an object to be blotted out from the face of the earth'.[102]

Likewise, in a debate concerning the possibility of negotiations for peace with France, War Secretary Henry Dundas reminded the house that France's intention was surely to 'turn their whole force to the destruction of England. The House must remember their declaration that the new Carthage on the banks of the Thames must be overturned.'[103] Though French usages had complicated, even radicalised, the meaning of Rome, refusal to engage with this kind of portrayal would have amounted to an acceptance of cultural inferiority on Britain's part. Indeed, given that Rome and Latin were an integral part of elite male education and identity in Britain, a failure to re-engage with Rome after the decisive victory at Waterloo would have been catastrophic for notions of Britishness and for political masculinities in the period. In spite of its problematic radical associations,

[102] *Cobbett's Parliamentary History of England,* 36 vols. (London: R. Bagshaw, 1806-1820), XXXII: 1189.
[103] *Cobbett's Parliamentary History of England,* XXXII: 602.

Britain was left with little choice but to reclaim the Roman parallel for British national, political and masculine values. Engagement with the Roman past had become as politically necessary as it was politically dangerous.

This cultural reclamation of Rome is most evident in the treatment of Wellington himself by British writers after Waterloo, and forms part of what Jonathan Sachs has termed a broader 'Roman Revival' in the early nineteenth century.[104] In 1815, only weeks after Wellington's victory at Waterloo, Byron wrote the following to a friend:

> Every hope of a republic is over, and we must go on under the old system. But I am sick at heart of politics and slaughters; and the luck which Providence is pleased to lavish on Lord Castlereagh is only proof of the little value the gods set upon prosperity [...] From this, however, Wellington should be excepted. He is a man, – and the Scipio of our Hannibal.[105]

For Byron, even deep disillusionment over the quashing of his republican dreams, and a repugnance for the social inequality produced thereof, are trumped by an overriding nationalism embodied by Wellington himself. Where Castlereagh is presented as 'lavish[ing]' in the spoils of slaughter and high office under the auspices of the goddess-like Providence, Wellington 'is a man' by superior and particularly Roman standards. In a direct reversal of the Rome/Carthage dichotomy that had so enraged British politicians, Wellington is set up as the conqueror of Carthage or, more specifically, as the defender of Rome against the Carthaginian aggressor. The right to style oneself and one's nation as the rightful heirs of the Roman tradition, and to determine the authoritative use of the past, becomes a spoil for the victor of Waterloo.

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[104] Sachs, p.225. This revival is fuelled by Italy's becoming more accessible to the British traveller, and characterised by the prevalence of republican-themed drama in London theatres.

[105] Lord Byron, 'Letter to Mr Moore, July 7 1815' in *Life of Lord Byron With His Letters and Journal,* ed. by Thomas Moore, 6 vols. (London: John Murray, 1854), III:57.

That Britain's reclamation of Rome amounts to a direct expression of triumph over French political models, and of defensive Wellingtonian masculinity over aggressive Napoleonic manliness, is best evidenced by the treatment of Canova's statue 'Napoleon as Mars the Peacemaker.' The statue was completed in 1806 and depicts the emperor in the heroic nude style, as the Roman god Mars. However, the finished statue did not arrive in Paris until five years after its completion because of logistical problems as to how best to transport the piece. Napoleon feared that the statue would be damaged by storms or fall into British hands if brought by sea, and he eventually designed a system whereby the statue could be ejected should the ship be captured.[106] Napoleon's fears ultimately came to pass after his defeat at Waterloo, when the British government acquired the statue in order to present it as a gift to Wellington, in recognition of his victory over the Emperor and his service to the state. As Christopher Johns notes, the statue remains to this day 'a "captive" of the stair balusters in Apsley House.' [107] Here national, military, and masculine dominance is played out as a question of ownership of ancient Rome and control over its meaning. The god of war, housed in an English domestic space, served as a monument to Wellington's victory, but also as a reminder of the beauty and satisfaction available to the public man who, having done his duty to his country, was able to return to the comforts of a peaceful home rather than instigating political agitation at home. The statue is also emblematic of Britain's ostensibly superior claim to be the heirs of the Roman tradition, and to determine the significance of that tradition not as a revolutionary rallying point but as a narrative of courage and civic duty in defence of the existing constitution.

Through recourse to this Roman parallel, British writers were able to establish Wellington at the head of a new style of masculinity and one which was rooted in notions

[106] See Christopher M. S. Johns, 'Portrait Mythology: Antonio Canova's Portraits of the Bonapartes', *Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 28 (1994), pp.115-129 (p.124). See also Patricia Mainardi, 'Assuring the Empire of the Future: The 1798 Fête de la Liberté', *Art Journal,* 48 (1989), pp.155-163 (p.160) on the presentation of the statue as a war trophy to Wellington.
[107] Johns, p.125.

of civic duty and self-discipline in service to one's country. Like the heroes of Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome*, whose masculine virtues included 'fortitude, temperance, veracity, spirit to resist oppression, respect for legitimate authority, fidelity in the observing of contracts, disinterestedness [and] ardent patriotism',[108] Wellington served as what Iain Pearse has termed a 'pedestrian foil'[109] to the eccentric, expansionist energy of Napoleon. Wellington's military prowess is set in the broader context of patriotic duty and his skill as a soldier is often downplayed in favour of more gentlemanly accomplishments. Thus, whilst editing a volume of Wellington's parliamentary speeches, John Gurwood compared his friend and mentor to Julius Caesar, but Gurwood is emphatic in his insistence that it is not Caesar's skill as a warlord that make him a suitable comparison with Wellington, so much as his oratorical abilities:

> We cannot deny that Julius Caesar was, in the common acceptation of the term, a greater orator – he of whom it is often said, that, had he devoted himself to the Forum, as he intended probably at one time (for he studied under a professional rhetorician at Rhodes), 'no one else could have been named with Cicero' [...] One observation made upon it by Quintilian (imitating, by the way, if not parodying a passage of Livy) seems equally applicable, in part at least, to the Duke, that he made speeches with the same genius with which he made war – the same vigour and the same acumen. We might not add the same vehemence; but, on the other hand, the Roman orator, we might safely affirm, argued less closely, expounded more diffusely, and had not always before his eyes in speaking that elementary proposition, which the Duke never for an instant lost sight of, whether in speech or action – that the shortest line between two points is a straight line.[110]

Gurwood privileges the image of Caesar as orator, as statesman and as public servant over the more robustly militaristic and ultimately hubristic aspects of the Caesarian legacy. Gentlemanliness, characterised by a mastery of oratorical skill, but more importantly, an

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[108] Macaulay, *Lays of Ancient Rome*, p.22.
[109] Iain Pears, 'The Gentleman and the Hero: Wellington and Napoleon in the Nineteenth Century', in *Myths of the English*, ed. Roy Porter (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), pp.100-115 (p.107). See also Philip Shaw, *Waterloo and the Romantic Imagination* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002) on the treatment of Wellington and Napoleon in British culture.
[110] John Gurwood, ed., *The Speeches of the Duke of Wellington in Parliament*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1854), I:x-xi.

economy and efficiency with words, replaces the more violent extravagances which had so overtly underpinned Napoleonic styles of political manliness.[111] The association of Wellington with Caesar on these terms was clearly intended to undermine whatever cultural or political influence was still bound up with the cult status of Napoleon: a Caesar without ruthless personal ambition, driven instead by patriotism and civic duty, would, according to historical tradition, negate the need for his assassination and for the kind of Augustus figure with whom Napoleon had associated himself.

Thomas Macaulay took a more unconventional literary approach to the task of reclaiming the Roman parallel for British political elites after Waterloo, and of refashioning the style of political masculinity that Rome was used to signify. In his 1824 essay the 'Wellingtoniad', Macaulay draws on the style and structure of classical epic to imagine a 'Grand National Epic Poem […] to be Published A.D.2824'[112] which would recount the events of the Napoleonic Wars. By imagining how the conflict would appear to readers at an interval of more than a thousand years from the events described – much the same way that Victorian readers experienced the events of the *Aeneid* – the text implies that it was not only a military victory that was won by Britain, but also the power to determine authoritative uses of the Roman parallel to sing the victories of Britain's great men. The determined reclamation of Rome from the French is evident in the structure of the narrative, which begins, like Virgil's *Aeneid*, by invoking the muse and introducing the hero of the piece, who is not Wellington at this point, but Napoleon. Napoleon is the son of Mars 'who had, some forty years before, usurped the conjugal rights of old Carlo Buonaparte'.[113] As Virgil chronicles the defeat of the Trojans at Troy, the escape of Aeneas and the wanderings of the hero across the Mediterranean, so too do the early books

[111] See Matthew Bevis, *The Art of Eloquence: Byron, Dickens, Tennyson, Joyce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) on the centrality of eloquence for notions of political and literary masculinity.
[112] Thomas Babington Macaulay, 'A Prophetic Account of a Grand National Epic Poem to be Entitled "The Wellingtoniad," and to be Published A.D.2824', in *The Miscellaneous Writings of Lord Macaulay*, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1860), I:141-153 (p.146).
[113] Macaulay, 'The Wellingtoniad', p.146.

of the 'Wellingtoniad' deal with Napoleon's defeat at the Battle of Leipzig, his escape from Elba, and a series of similar Mediterranean episodes. Sticking closely to his Virgilian model, wherein the focus switches from Aeneas and the Trojans to Turnus and the Latins after the sixth book, Macaulay shifts his gaze to the English in the second half of his work. The goddess Alecto is sent by Mars to incite the English to war in the House of Commons, resulting in a poignant leave-taking scene between the Duke and Duchess of Wellington. Meanwhile Neptune, who has sided against war-like Mars in this conflict of gods and nations, asks Venus to secure from Vulcan a shield for the duke on which is depicted several quintessentially English scenes: 'a dance at Almack's, a boxing match at the five's court, a lord mayor's procession'.[114] Ekphrastic description of armour is a common device of classical epic and yet, when combined with such everyday scenes, Wellington's shield heroizes a style of English manliness that is not wedded to notions of individual or egotistical glory, but is defensive and rooted in notions of civic duty. However tempting it may be to read the 'Wellingtoniad' as parody, the final book represents a very serious reconfiguration of political manliness into these terms, and a desire to embed these values at the heart of male elite culture in Britain. After his defeat at the hands of Wellington at Waterloo, Napoleon flees to London to beg mercy of King George III. The encounter mirrors that of Aeneas and the defeated Turnus in *Aeneid* book twelve, only now Napoleon, despite his being presented as the heroic Aeneas-figure at the start of the text, takes on the role of the defeated Turnus – a representative of another race who, like the Carthaginians, came to be written into history mainly by Roman hands.

Macaulay also makes a notable divergence from his Virgilian source material in order to signal a rejection of violent or combative masculinity in the wake of violent warfare. In the closing section of Virgil's poem, Aeneas executes the defeated Turnus in cold blood after he notices the Latin king wearing a Trojan belt as a trophy. Many scholars

[114] Macaulay, 'The Wellingtoniad', p.150.

have read this as Aeneas's failure to maintain the standards of *pietas* and duty to one's *paterfamilias* which have characterized his masculine virtue to this point. By reconfiguring the final outcome of his poem, Macaulay makes a clear argument for the superiority of British values.[115] Like Aeneas, Macaulay's King George notices the sword belt Napoleon wears when the defeated Emperor is brought to Britain to face justice. The belt, in this case, belonged to the Duke of Brunswick and although King George 'instantly draws his sword, and is about to stab the destroyer of his kinsman [...] Piety and hospitality [...] restrain his hand'[116] and he condemns Napoleon to imprisonment on St. Helena instead. Masculine self-restraint according to post-Waterloo ideals wins out over the latent fury and bloodlust of the classical hero. Justice is served on English soil and according to established constitutional codes, rather than on the field of battle or out with the existing systems of law and governance. It is King George and parliament, as representatives of the law and the British people, who oversee the final victory of Britain over the disruptive, combative, and overtly aggressive masculinity of Napoleon. There is no Achillean self-glorification or Aenean frenzy in Macaulay's 'Wellingtoniad'. In fact Wellington himself does not figure at all in the final book, though he gives his name to the work as a whole. It would seem that Macaulay is presenting Wellington as the hero of the piece not for his capacity to wield a sword so much as his ability to bear a shield in defence of Britain, her constitution and her values.

For statesmen determined to preserve the political status quo after the upheaval of the Napoleonic Wars, reasserting Britain's claim to the Roman parallel was crucial for several reasons. Firstly, it reinforced a narrative of cultural as well as military victory over French aggression; it helped to rewrite or downplay the radical or republican associations of Rome which the French had emphasised as part of their reception of the Roman past;

[115] See Michael C.J. Putnam, ed., *The Humanness of Heroes: Studies in the Conclusion of Virgil's Aeneid* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), for the most comprehensive discussion of the ending of Virgil's *Aeneid* and the many possible, and problematic, interpretations of Aeneas's killing of Turnus.
[116] Macaulay, 'The Wellingtoniad', p.152.

and finally, it was crucial for affirming non-violent models of political manliness in the wake of the conflict. However, British responses to the revolution and its political goals were by no means uniformly condemnatory, nor was this celebratory refiguring of Rome entirely free from political and ideological contention. As Philip Shaw has noted, 'There is […] something peculiarly unsettled about the tone of public discourse in the months following Waterloo,'[117] with such unsettled responses coming primarily from radical or republican voices.

Whig statesman Charles Fox was perhaps the most public and prominent of these contentious voices. Like Byron, Fox had welcomed the revolution, comparing its political and historical significance to those of the Glorious Revolution in England. Fox opposed the war with France and the suspension of the *habeas corpus* in 1794, which was enacted amidst fears of insurrection at home.[118] Representations of Fox can be understood not merely in the context of late eighteenth-century neoclassical aesthetics, but also as direct interactions with the Franco-British struggle to claim or deny the republican values inherent in the Roman example. Richard Westmacott RA's posthumous statue of Fox, which stands in Bloomsbury Square, was commissioned by friends of the subject after his death in 1806. Fox is shown in a toga, clutching a senatorial scroll. He is the epitome of a lawmaker and a statesman, but one decked out in the paraphernalia of republicanism and loaded with all the connotations of anti-monarchist, even revolutionary sentiment. Certainly it is a depiction intended to undermine what Philip Ayres has called an eighteenth-century 'propensity of the English aristocracy to imagine themselves as virtuous Romans in the century following the Revolution settlement of 1688-9'.[119] The location of the statue is equally significant in this regard, looking directly over Bedford Place, the site of the ancestral home of Fox's political friend and ally Francis, Duke of Bedford, who had

[117] Shaw, p.4.
[118] See David Wilson, 'The Year of the Fox', *Journal of Liberal History*, 50 (Spring 2006), pp.4-11 (p.5).
[119] Philip Ayres, *Classical Culture and the Idea of Rome in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.xiii.

been, as David Wilson notes: 'One of the noble lords who remained faithful to Fox when many senior Whigs, no longer able to support Fox's opposition to the war with France, deserted him and went over to the government.'[120] Thus, even when British political elites faced a common threat from France, the Roman example was not deployed without conflict and contestation at home. Statesmen looking to resist calls for reform and to cement conservative models of political authority, never quite managed to stabilize the meaning of ancient Rome in political discourse and to disentangle it from more radical, republican associations. The stability and coherence of such ideals became much more fragmented in the decades after Waterloo, as political factions in Britain clashed over issues of reform, and articulated their differences partly by staking conflicting claims to the Roman parallel. In the years leading up to the Reform Act of 1832, the meanings and associations of ancient Rome would become even more contested and would get redeployed in Britain by groups looking to strengthen and legitimize their calls for political reform.

2.2 Radical Receptions and the Reform Act of 1832

The French Revolution cast a long shadow. Likewise, French revolutionary receptions of Rome continued to be contested throughout the 1830s. I suggest that, whilst radical reformers like Leigh Hunt tapped into the revolutionary associations of Rome as a way of mounting attacks on the political establishment and calling for constitutional change, for the moderate statesman the Roman parallel became too volatile for use in an atmosphere of reformist agitation. In this context we can make sense of what is otherwise an anomalous phenomenon in British political discourse – the determined shunning of Roman references in parliamentary debates of the 1830s, by men who, as we saw in chapter one, relied on such classical parallels as a means of cementing collective masculine identities.

[120] Wilson, p.9.

In November 1830, Charles Grey formed a coalition ministry unified in part by a shared opposition to the kind of staunchly conservative political authority that Wellington had come to represent by that time. The new government was faced with the task of strengthening their own position whilst walking a precarious line between increasingly violent calls for reform and conservative factions demanding the preservation of 'traditional values, property (especially land), agriculture, Anglicanism, economic protection, social hierarchy, local paternalism and the unreformed legislature.'[121] The division of the political classes into factional groups also produced competing notions of masculine identity and ideality. In 1835, for instance, Leigh Hunt's poem 'Captain Sword and Captain Pen' delivers an even more scathing attack on what he sees as aristocratic, conservative, Wellingtonian manliness than anything expressed by Grey's more moderate supporters. 'The object of this poem', Hunt writes, 'is to show the horrors of war, the false ideas of power produced in the minds of its leaders, and, by inference, the unfitness of those leaders for the government of the world.'[122] The piece is a direct attack on conservative masculinities, and one which is achieved by Hunt's harnessing of the aggressive, Napoleonic associations of ancient Rome and redeploying these not against a foreign aggressor, but against Wellington himself.

The poem begins with a description of Captain Sword's march into battle as the supreme commander of an army of nameless, faceless soldiers, 'each looking like all' (p.2). In the second canto, Sword leads his men to victory in a bloody battle, where they wreak slaughter so unnatural it is likened to uxoricide and the breaking of natural bonds between men as soldiers go 'slipping through friends' blood, 'athirst for foes' (p.8). Cantos three and four offer a glimpse of the impact of the war on the lives of women. Captain Sword attends a ball to celebrate his victory and is 'entwin'd' in 'all the arms of

[121] Michael J. Turner, *The Age of Unease: Government and Reform in Britain, 1782 – 1832* (Stroud: Sutton, 2000), p.221.
[122] Leigh Hunt, *Captain Sword and Captain Pen* (London: Charles Knight, 1835), p.49. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

womankind' (p.15) whilst out on the battlefield a mother and wife search for the body of their lost loved one. The final cantos see Captain Sword become mad and power-crazed as he fails to redistribute among the people the power he has won in battle. Instead Sword seeks to make himself a king, as Caesar and Napoleon had done in all but name:

> Captain Sword, like a witless thing,
> Of all under heaven must needs be a king,
> King of Kings, and lord of lords,
> Swayer of souls as well as of swords,
> Ruler of speech, and through speech, of thought
> And hence to his brain a madness was brought. (p.31)

Finally, however, Sword is eclipsed by a new kind of hero in the form of the non-violent and supremely articulate Captain Pen. As we shall see, Pen resembles Carlyle's Man of Letters in that he is a man of the modern age of text and printing, but he is also, in his ability to reach vast audiences with his words, an embodiment of popular political protest and widespread calls for political reform.

Sword's masculinity and political authority are defined solely by his military successes. He rides into battle surrounded by soldiers, ensigns, flags and bugles which all serve to proclaim his militaristic manliness 'as if pomp were a toy to his manly pride' (p.3). Domination on the battlefield is emphasised through the language of violent penetration. Sword himself is a 'Pacer of highway and piercer of ford' (p.5) and a 'Lord [...] of pain' (p.6). The slaughter and suffering, which Hunt implies are the inevitable consequences of such a disturbing style of combative masculinity, are represented in the illustrations to the 1835 text in a particularly Roman form. (Fig. 2) Here the figure, who is simultaneously Death, War and Sword himself, is depicted in the tradition of the classical heroic nude, wearing a laurel crown and resembling the colossal statue of Napoleon as Mars the Peacemaker. Indeed, such Romanesque representations of Sword and his ethos, coupled with his inexhaustible egotism, aggressively expansionist agenda and deliberate

manipulation of his own public image, are clearly intended to evoke Napoleonic comparisons in the minds of British readers. In this context, it is hardly surprising that Sword is described as 'incarnate, afresh, like a Caesar of old' (p.33). Hunt is tapping into the negative associations of Caesar as an aggressive dictator but, startlingly, he then proceeds to redeploy this image not towards any foreign aggressor, but towards conservative models of manliness in Britain. Rather than embodying opposing values, as was the case with Macaulay's 'Wellingtoniad', Napoleon and Wellington are unsettlingly conflated in Hunt's poem, and merged together in the form of Captain Sword. Thus, in his final moments on the battlefield, Sword is not defeated, but replaced:

> He vanished and thinly there stood in his place
> The new shape of Sword, with an humbler face,
> Rebuking his brother, and preaching for right,
> Yet aye when it came, standing proud on his might,
> And squaring his claims with his old small sight;
> Then struck up his drums, with ensign unfurl'd
> And said 'I will walk through a subject world;
> Earth, just as it is, shall for ever endure,
> The rich be too rich and the poor;
> And for this I'll stop knowledge. I'll say to it "Flow
> Thus far; but presume no farther to flow:
> For me, as I list, shall the free airs blow."' (pp.33-34)

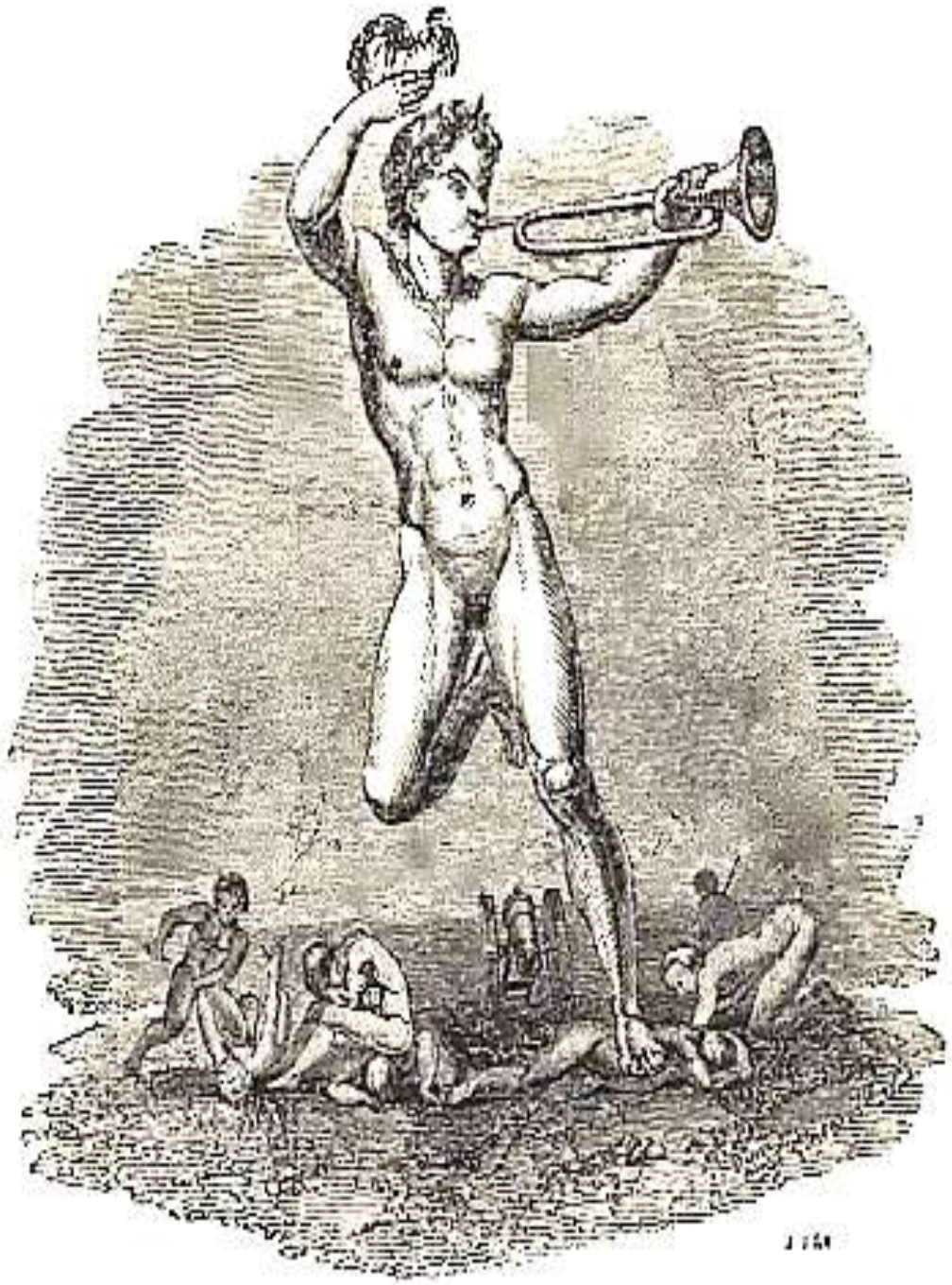

Fig. 2. ‘The Dance of Death’, from *Captain Sword and Captain Pen,* p.22.

This new Sword, though 'humbler' than his predecessor, is not set up in opposition to Napoleonic eccentricity and violence, but as a successor to it. The new Sword inherits the negative associations with Caesar and Napoleon and, though he protests his difference to these men, the new Wellingtonian Sword soon takes up his predecessors' task of making the world 'subject' to his own will. Where Macaulay's Wellington was an agent of liberation and service to a higher constitutional authority, Hunt's Wellington/Sword seeks to position himself as the ultimate political authority through force of arms, and by controlling the flow of wealth and knowledge and preserving it in the hands of an elite few. Ultimately, he represents conservative, anti-reformist ideologies, monopolising education and property as the paths to political authority. The result is a scathing attack by Hunt on British conservative power structures, achieved by harnessing nationalistic disdain for Napoleon and turning it inwards to the very heart of British political values and political masculinities.

As we might expect, then, Captain Pen possesses none of this manic, violent energy. He is not a 'swayer of [...] swords' (p.31) like Caesar or Napoleon, but possesses an even greater power in his mastery of the spoken and written word. If Hunt uses Rome to capture the violent imperium of Sword, then Pen, by the same parallel, is not a military opponent to such authority, but a more subtle, sophisticated adversary. He is:

> A conqueror strange, who sat in his home
> Like the wizard that plagued the ships of Rome,
> Noiseless, show-less, dealing no death,
> But victories, winged, went forth from his breath. (p.31)

Pen's almost magical eloquence results in an influence over men that Sword, with all his military *imperium* and aristocratic power, can only dream of. When Sword challenges Pen to recruit a million men and meet him in battle, he is 'vex'd' by Pen's ability to summon 'a world of men' (p.38) to his cause, which is an explicitly reformist one, bent on dismantling

the power structures which allow Sword to wield such power over the lives of the population. Pen's identity is not driven by egotistical individualism, but by a conviction that he speaks for and on behalf of the people. He states that 'I'm every thing – all things – I'm clergymen, cooks / Clerks, carpenters, hosiers, I'm Pitt – I'm Lord Grey', (p.35) and is later given the epithet of 'many-souled Captain Pen' (p.46) to reflect his role as the rightful representative of the people. He embodies a new, reformed type of masculine virtue which is superior to the conservative, Wellingtonian authority which Hunt, by means of the parallel with Caesarean Rome, and specifically Napoleonic receptions of that past, insists is to be rejected and, if possible, removed. However, by 1835 when the poem was published, Hunt had already witnessed the reform Act of 1832. The characters of Sword and Pen, and the different styles of political manliness they embody, are underwritten by the knowledge that reform had already been accomplished without radical revolt or popular violence. Hunt's characterisation of the oligarchic, brutal Sword as an inferior to the non-violent, statesmanlike manliness of Pen is validated retrospectively by the events of 1832.

In the months leading up to the passing of the Bill, however, the outcome was less certain. As such, the rhetoric of political debates in this period is far less stable and much more anxious in its evocation of Roman models associated with popular violence. Indeed there is a determined refusal by MPs – most of whom as we saw in chapter one, relied on a common network of classical knowledges to cement collective masculine identities – to use Roman examples in parliamentary debates about reform. There is, for instance, only a single reference made to 'Caesar' in reform debates of the 1830s. It comes in 1831, and was made by John Hobhouse to characterise 'Mr Fox's opinions' on the subject of reform – opinions which, as we have seen already, were not unsympathetic towards the more radical, republican point of view.[123] No further references to Caesar are made in parliament for the remainder of the 1830s. Even Thomas Macaulay, whose 'Wellingtoniad',

[123] See HC Debate, 3 March 1831, vol. 2, cc1273-356. (c.1293).

'Fragments of a Roman Tale' (1823), and the later *Lays of Ancient Rome* all use Rome as a vehicle for exploring questions of political authority and masculinity, refers to the Roman past only once in all his parliamentary speeches made in support of reform.[124]

It is easy to appreciate the reticence of moderate and anti-reformist politicians to use Roman parallels which had been so closely linked to revolutionary and Napoleonic regimes. Yet, whilst references to Rome are shunned as a means of talking about political reform in Britain, references to and warnings about French constitutional upheaval are regularly proffered as cautionary tales. In an anti-reformist article for the *Quarterly Review* in 1831, one commentator warns that any reform will result in more and more concessions and lead 'to the entire prostration of rank and property at the feet of a Jacobin faction.'[125] He is troubled by the divisions and disunity that the reform debates have created among the elite political class, whose collective masculine identity is dependent upon solidarity in order to protect it from encroachments from without, as well as from violent upheaval. The author insists that the need to resist French styles of popular violence is where the anti-reformers and reformers share common ground. He writes: 'we asserted the opinion, that a dread of physical force was the chief motive of the multitude of seeming conversions to the cause of Parliamentary Reform which had shown themselves since the "Three Days" of July at Paris […] there never existed, from the beginning of time, such a thing as a reformer from conviction.'[126] The author acknowledges that he had been a target of public criticism for his dismissive characterisations of reformist motives. Nonetheless, the idea that reform was necessary in order to diffuse more radical and even revolutionary forms of popular protest were equally common amongst the reformers themselves. Lord Grey wrote

[124] In a speech on 'Parliamentary Reform' delivered before the House of Commons in February 1832, Macaulay warned of the need to make concessions to a public eager for enfranchisement that: 'I need not remind the Committee that the Caesars, while ruling by the sword, while putting to death without a trial every senator, every magistrate, who incurred their displeasure, yet found it necessary to keep the populace of the imperial city in good humour by distributions of corn and shows of wild beasts.' HC Debate, 28 February 1832, vol.10, cc.908-60 (c.930).

[125] [Anon.], 'Would Reform in Parliament be a Benefit to the Country?', *Quarterly Review*, 45 (Apr 1831), pp.252-339 (p.256).

[126] 'Would Reform in Parliament be a Benefit to the Country?', p.258.

to King William IV that reform was crucial in order to 'remove at once and forever, all rational grounds for complaint' among the middle classes, whilst Macaulay insisted that 'We drive over to the side of revolution those whom we shut out from power.'[127] Even the more radical voices in the debate, which are much less hesitant about using the language of revolution, steer clear of explicitly Roman parallels which would have situated their calls for change within an inescapably French model of constitutional change. 'Revolution' in Britain was not going to be conducted according to the violent, republican models that Brutus and Caesar exemplified for the French. Instead, we find a *rhetoric* of revolution deployed to support a *reality* of reform that is far less violent. Published in *Cobbett's Weekly Register* at the height of the reform debates in 1831, the anonymous author of the piece 'To All Men Who Do Not Like to be Duped' refutes the claims of Macaulay and Grey, insisting instead that reform will not amount to an appeasement or mollification of radical aims:

> Never rely upon their giving way upon the question of reform for the sake of *avoiding* a *revolution*. A reform is sure to bring them down into a state from which they never ought to have been elevated. A reform would be sure to do this; but a revolution would be sure to do no such thing […] They would have certain chances in a revolution; whereas a quiet reform is sure to pluck them, feather by feather, until they be as bare as robins six hours old.[128]

The author assuages the masculine pride of his readership by reconfiguring reform – even reform accomplished through discussion and concession – as a revolutionary act. Furthermore, it is an act which will result in the rise of popular or radical political manliness, at the expense of old conservative power structures and politicians, which he envisages as being reduced to a state of helplessness or infantilization by the actions of the people. The article is representative of the more extreme reformist stance in Britain in the

[127] Letter from Lord Grey to William IV. Cited in Turner, p. 223; HC Debate, 2 March 1831, vol.2, cc.1156-253 (c.1193).
[128] William Cobbett, 'To All Men Who Do Not Like to be Duped', *Cobbett's Weekly Register*, 21 July 1821-September 12 1835 (16 April, 1831), pp.108-123 (p.121).

early 1830s, yet even this kind of radical political manliness is not driven by a desire for violence, nor is it couched in the language of ancient Rome.

What is far more common in a decade of political unease is a heroizing of moderate political masculinity very similar in its core values to the praise that Leigh Hunt heaps on Captain Pen. Moderate reformers looked to the recent past for heroes who could be shown to embody reformist ideologies, but who were not associated with revolutionary or radical leanings. William Pitt was one such figure. One writer for *Blackwood's Magazine* insisted that Pitt was the man who personified most perfectly the values of a nation which 'eminently honours political manliness',[129] and that this perfect masculine virtue stemmed from Pitt's ability to steer a moderate course between conservatism and radicalism:

> The strength of his antagonists, their connexion with the proudest part of the aristocracy on one side through North, and with the most violent part of the democracy on the other through Fox […] raised a mass of obstacles, before which the boldest courage, or the most practised wisdom of earlier polity would have recoiled.[130]

We have here an ideal of moderate political manliness which is defined by its difference from the toga-clad radical statesmanship of Charles Fox and, by extension, the even more extreme and even more explicitly Romanesque manliness of Napoleon and the French revolutionaries. The absence of Rome in political discourse of the 1830s, then, far from being a consequence of the irrelevance of Roman models to the political climate in the age of reform, reflects the incendiary potential of the Roman parallel to evoke the spectre of revolution and political violence. It is an uneasy reception of the Roman past which would lead, as Frank Turner has noted, to the eclipsing of Roman parallels by Greek ones for much of the next forty years, with Rome being shunted sideways into religious discourses, where it is deployed in works like Bulwer Lytton's *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834),

[129] 'William Pitt', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 37 (April 1835), pp.557-579 (p.557).
[130] 'William Pitt', p.557.

Kingsley's *Hypatia* (1853) and Newman's *Callista* (1855) as the enemy of pious Christian manliness.[131]

2.3 Caesar, Cicero and Trollope's Public Men

By 1870, the reluctance of public men to engage in a more meaningful way with Rome was a source of frustration to Anthony Trollope. In the introduction to his *Life of Caesar*, Trollope writes that:

> It may perhaps be fairly said that the Commentaries of Cæsar are the beginning of modern history […] [Caesar] deals with those great movements in Europe from which have sprung, and to which we can trace, the present political condition of the nations. Interested as the scholar, or the reader of general literature, may be in the great deeds of the heroes of Greece, and in the burning words of Greek orators, it is almost impossible for him to connect by any intimate and thoroughly-trusted link the fortunes of Athens, or Sparta, or Macedonia, with our own times and our own position. [Likewise] we cannot realise and bring home to ourselves the Punic Wars or the Social War, the Scipios and the Gracchi, or even the contest for power between Marius and Sulla, as we do the Gallic Wars and the invasion of Britain, by which the civilization was first carried westwards, or the great civil wars […] by which was commenced a line of emperors continued almost down to our own days, and to which in some degree may be traced the origin and formation of almost every existing European nation.[132]

Trollope insists firstly that the Roman world was far more relevant to the political reality of the Victorian male than the world of ancient Greece; and secondly that Britain's political elites could not understand their own identity and authority without acknowledging that of Julius Caesar.[133] The identity of the public man in Britain had its origins – both in practical institutional terms, and in cultural ones – in the Roman age. More than eighty years after the events of the French Revolution, Trollope is also insistent that the British political establishment need no longer feel threatened by the Napoleonic

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[131] See Turner, p.69.
[132] Anthony Trollope, *The Commentaries of Caesar* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1852), p.2.
[133] See also Randolph Faries, *Ancient Rome in the English Novel* (Philadelphia: Lyon and Arnmour,1923) that 'modern life is more immediately related to the life of ancient Rome than that of ancient Greece' (p.7).

associations of the Caesarean parallel. Indeed, he finds much to admire in the French emperor, although always with the security of hindsight, and the knowledge that Napoleon's imperial project was ultimately a failure. He notes:

> If there be any fair antagonist to Cæsar in this claim [to be the greatest general in history] it is Napoleon. As a soldier he was equally great, and the area of his operations was equally extended. But there is an old saying which tells us that no one can be sure of his fortune till the end shall have come; and Cæsar's death on the steps on the Capitol was more in accordance with our ideas of greatness than that of Napoleon at St Helena.[134]

Trollope's Palliser novels were written in the 1860s and 1870s during a period of re-emerging French Caesarism under Napoleon III as well as renewed calls for political reform. They are thus particularly useful as indicators of a political re-engagement with Rome from the 1860s, and as a fascinating case study of how Rome plays into the semantics of the political male. Begun in 1865 with *Can You Forgive Her?*, the Palliser series grew to include *Phineas Finn* (1867), *The Eustace Diamonds* (1873), *Phineas Redux* (1876), *The Prime Minister* (1876) and *The Duke's Children* (1880). Trollope described the Pallisers themselves – the Dukes of Omnium and Lady Glencora – as 'pure creations [...] the best I ever made'[135] and cited the vastness and broad chronological sweep of the Palliser saga as the basis of the novels' appeal. Trollope's Palliser period is also bookended by the writing of his two best-known classical works, the *Commentaries of Caesar* and the *Life of Cicero* (1880), and I suggest that Trollope uses Caesar and Cicero as ciphers for Liberal and Conservative ideologies respectively. By drawing on the histories of these two very different Roman statesmen, Trollope discusses the relative merits and problems of each political party and their associated ideals of masculinity.

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[134] Trollope, *Commentaries of Caesar,* p.6.
[135] Anthony Trollope, 'Letter to Mary Holmes, 15 June 1876' in *Letters of Anthony Trollope*, ed. by Bradford Allen Booth (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), p.355.

Trollope's fascination with Julius Caesar can be traced back to the period he spent reviewing Charles Merivale's *History of the Romans Under the Empire* (1865). 'I became at the time,' he wrote, 'anxious about Caesar, and as desirous of reaching the truth as to his character [...] I lived Caesar, and debated with myself constantly whether he crossed the Rubicon as a tyrant or as a patriot.'[136] Simultaneous impulses of fascination and anxiety over the meaning of Caesar were increasingly common in this period. Though temporal distance from Anglo-French conflicts of the early decades of the century had gone some way towards de-radicalizing ancient Rome as a political image, 1865 was also the year that Napoleon III published his own *Life of Caesar,* rekindling some of the earlier conflict over Rome as an ideological space. Critics praised Napoleon's *Caesar* for the thoroughness of its scholarship and the quality of the writing, though they frequently stopped short of endorsing any political lessons derived by Napoleon from Caesar's life. Charles Merivale himself insisted that:

> On matters of purely literary interest, the author of the 'History of Julius Caesar' has furnished us with some valuable discoveries, which deserve, no doubt, our grateful acknowledgement [...] But our vexation and disappointment are at least equal to our satisfaction, and we are bound to declare that, wherever the smallest element of political interest can be imported into a question, we have nothing to look for from his respect for himself or for others.[137]

Another critic was far more cynical about the emperor's choice of Rome as subject matter:

> Undisquieted, unmistakeable, confessed, and glaring is the fact that this book has been written to serve dynastic purposes. Whatever truth it may contain, however cogent may be its narrative [...] the world, studying this story of a great life, cannot for an instant forget that Napoleon is writing of

[136] Trollope, *Autobiography*, p.85.
[137] Charles Merivale, 'Napoleon's History of Julius Caesar', *The Contemporary Review*, 3 (1866), pp.118-129 (p.129).

> Caesar mainly in order that the fundamental Napoleonic idea may be better appreciated by mankind.[138]

Whatever Trollope's own reservations about Caesar's personal morality, or about the impact of Napoleonic receptions, he uses Caesar to represent what he explicitly identifies as 'Liberal' values.[139] 'Though a patrician by birth,' he writes, Caesar 'succeeded his uncle [Marius] in the popular party.' This is in contrast to Trollope's description of Caesar's political enemies – men like Sulla – who served 'what we perhaps may call the Conservative interest.' [140] Caesar embodies an ideal of Liberal manliness which is characterized by forward-looking attitudes and tireless energy in the pursuit of political, but also literary, greatness. Trollope observes in the *Commentaries* that:

> Surely no man was ever so worked […] Caesar was not only a general; he was also an engineer, an astronomer, an orator, a poet, a high priest […] And he was a politician, of whom it may be said that, though he was intimately acquainted with the ferocity of opposition, he knew nothing of its comparative leisure. We have had busy statesmen writing books, two prime ministers translating Homer, another writing novels, a fourth known as a historian, a dramatist, and a biographer. But they did not lead armies as well as the Houses of Parliament.'[141]

In the Palliser novels, the character who most closely resembles this Caesarean style of Liberal energy is the Prime Minister Mr Gresham. Gresham is described as 'a man with no feelings for the past, void of historical association, hardly with memories – living altogether for the future which he is anxious to fashion out of the vigour of his own brain.'[142] The association of Caesar with the Liberal position becomes even more marked if we consider a letter to Mary Holmes in which Trollope admits that 'certain well-known political characters, such as Disraeli and Gladstone, have been used as models for such

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[138] [Anon.], 'London, Tuesday, February 28th', *The Standard*, 28 February 1865, p.4. See also J.P. Parry, 'The Impact of Napoleon III on British Politics,' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 11 (2001), pp.147-75.
[139] See Anthony Trollope, *Phineas Finn* (London: Penguin, 1972), p.300.
[140] Trollope, *Commentaries of Caesar*, p.9.
[141] Trollope, *Commentaries of Caesar*, pp.19-20.
[142] Trollope, *Phineas Finn*, p.300.

fictitious personages as Daubeny and Gresham.'[143] In this context, Gladstone, as a forward-looking Liberal is presented as the cultural and political heir of Caesar – a popular candidate dedicated to serving the people and the Liberal cause, but without the misguided, self-glorifying tendencies associated with Napoleonic Caesarism.

If Caesar represents the future for Trollope, then Cicero, as George Butte has noted, represents the past, and the wealth of 'inherited institutions and traditions'[144] which had, for centuries, underpinned conservative models of political authority in Britain. Foremost among such models was an insistence upon property and social connections as markers of political success. Trollope published his *Life of Cicero* in 1880 and his admiration for the ancient statesman is undeniable, though certainly surprising, given the author's praise for Caesar ten years earlier. Cicero, Trollope writes, 'refused to be Caesar's lieutenant' and, by extension, a force of rapid liberal change or civil war, because he 'felt himself bound not to serve against the Republic'.[145] Cicero's refusal to engage in civil strife or to participate in radical upheavals of the constitution represents an act of preservation of constitutional and political ideals. Cicero serves the system in its most traditional form, rather than seeking to remould or reshape that system for the future or for his own political gain. The fact that Trollope was becoming increasingly disillusioned with the Caesar-like Gladstone over the question of Irish land policy by 1880 goes some way towards explaining this shift in his estimation of the conservative political ideals which, in his formulation, were best embodied by Cicero. Where once as a younger man Trollope declared that: 'I [...] am myself so given to rebellion in politics that I am delighted to see and hear any Cataline [*sic*] defended, and any Cicero attacked'; an older Trollope insisted in 1880 that: 'had I

[143] Anthony Trollope, 'Letter to Mary Holmes, 15 June 1876', cited in Booth, p.355.
[144] George Butte, 'Trollope's Duke of Omnium and "The Pain of History": A Study of the Novelist's Politics', *Victorian Studies*, 24 (1981), pp.209-227 (p.210). See also Mary Roshner, 'The Two Faces of Cicero', *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 18 (1988), pp.251-58 for more on the place of Cicero in nineteenth century culture and literature.
[145] Anthony Trollope, *Life of Cicero* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1880), p.7.

been a Roman of those days, I should have preferred Cicero, with his memories of the past, to Caesar, with his ambition for the future.'[146]

It is a shift from liberal leanings towards more conservative models of political manliness which is echoed very closely in the career of Plantagenet Palliser, the Duke of Omnium and central character of the Palliser series. Palliser, the son of the old Duke of Omnium, is first introduced as an aspiring politician who is keen to disassociate himself from his father's staunchly conservative attitudes and displays of wealth. However, as George Butte rightly notes, Palliser's entry into political life is not achieved through his own Caesar-like energies or innovation, but through very traditional, conservative power structures rooted in birth and property.[147] Palliser's attitude towards the election process, and specifically the issue of pocket boroughs, is indicative of this inherent traditionalism. As a young aristocrat asked about the outcome of the election in which he stood in *Can You Forgive Her?*, Palliser speaks 'with something like disdain in his voice as to the possibility of anybody having stood against him in his own family borough.'[148] He serves under two Liberal Prime Ministers – Mr Gresham and Mr Mildmay – before the death of his father precipitates his entry into the House of Lords. He then goes on to be elected Prime Minister and, after his initial characterization as a Ciceronian figure, whose authority rests on birth and property more than personal merit, the Duke becomes an aspiring Caesar in *The Prime Minister*, and a man keen to effect change through his own Liberal energies. However, his premiership, as we shall see, is not a success. His term as Prime Minister also creates tensions between Palliser and his wife, Lady Glencora, who is far more given to displays of wealth and to hosting lavish parties than her more introverted husband. After his resignation from office and the death of his wife in the later novels, Palliser dedicates himself to the management of his family's finances, and to arranging

[146] Cited in Booth, p.167; Trollope, *Life of Cicero*, p.84.
[147] Butte, p.220-222.
[148] Anthony Trollope, *Can You Forgive Her?* (London: Penguin, 2004), p.721.

suitable marriages for his children, before eventually returning to public office as President of the Council. In the final novel Palliser, now an old man, makes use of the same power structures to secure the borough of Polpenno as a seat for his eldest son. It is a clear echo of the conservative hegemonies which ensured his own entry into politics several decades earlier and prompted one commentator from *The Spectator* to categorize *The Duke's Children* as a 'dramatic essay, if we may term it, upon the aristocratic principle, in relation to politics, society and morality.'[149] Out of all of Trollope's characters in the series, it is Palliser who is most often depicted by means of Roman parallels, as he struggles to forge a stable identity as both a man and a statesman, torn between the oppositional values embodied by Caesar and Cicero. We have seen already Trollope's own conflicted sense of whether it is better, both for the individual and the nation, to be governed by Caesarean or Ciceronian ideals. In the character of Plantagenet Palliser, Trollope works through some of these questions in a fictional space, and by means of a character who, like himself, aspires to be a Caesar in service of his country, but who is by his later years much closer in nature to the traditional Ciceronian model.

Despite the conservatism of his early youth and old age, the duke campaigns tirelessly during his time as Prime Minister for the reform of the county suffrage, and especially of those pocket boroughs which had for centuries guaranteed aristocratic hegemonies such as those of his own family. The Silverbridge election in *The Prime Minister*, wherein the duke accepts being politically discredited rather than allow his wife, and by extension himself, to be implicated in the fixing of elections, is the point at which he most resembles Lord Chiltern's description of the Pallisers as 'great aristocrats, and yet [ones who] are always going in for the people.'[150] It is a description which can be applied to the Duke of Omnium as fittingly as it can to Julius Caesar. Indeed the Caesar parallel,

[149] [Anon.], 'The Duke's Children', *The Spectator*, 12 June 1880, p.18.
[150] Anthony Trollope, *Phineas Redux* (London: Penguin, 2003), p.117.

though it begins as one of many classical references of seemingly limited significance, is ultimately moved to the foreground of the novel's discursive structures by the end.

When he is first elected Prime Minister, Palliser is anxious that he should assert his political authority according to the Caesarean model of action and change, in order that history might judge him with other Victorian 'Caesars' like Wellington or Thomas Arnold. As Lady Glencora puts it, the duke 'only wants to be useful'[151] and the duke himself cannot 'endure the idea that it should be written in history that he had allowed himself to be made a fainéant Prime Minister' (p.231). Palliser's intentions are good, and he takes up office with high hopes of reforming the electoral system and even instituting his own political pet project of introducing a decimal currency – something which would not be seen in Britain until 1972. Yet the duke's time as Prime Minister is ultimately a story of failed masculinity, at least after the Caesarean model of the energetic public man. In this regard, Palliser is often compared unfavourably with Mr Gresham, Trollope's fictional Gladstone and, as we have seen, the embodiment of Caesar-like political manliness. The reasons for Palliser's failure as Prime Minister are two-fold. Firstly, his desire to be useful and to be remembered as such is a paralysing one. His fear of criticism and failure are exacerbated by his 'thin skin'. It is, as Trollope notes, a significant failing in terms of political manliness:

> One wants in a Prime Minister a good many things, but not very great things. He should be clever but need not be a genius; he should be conscientious but by no means straight-laced; he should be cautious but never timid, bold but never venturesome; he should have a good digestion, genial manners, and, above all, a thick skin. (p.353)

Easily hurt by criticisms of his leadership or of his character, Palliser's hypersensitivity serves as a sign of imperfect political manliness, and even effeminacy. The duke's wife, Lady Glencora, observes this most cuttingly when she tells her husband: 'I sometimes

[151] Anthony Trollope, *The Prime Minister* (London: Penguin, 1994), p.544. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

think, Plantagenet, that I should have been the man, my skin is so thick; and that you should have been the woman, yours is so thin […] I wish I could make you thick-skinned for your own [sake]' (pp.368-69).

The second reason for Palliser's failed political masculinity is his inability to embrace the public, performative aspects of political office. Seeking only to work hard and quietly for the betterment of the nation, the duke cannot appreciate the need to create for himself a public persona, or to consolidate his position through displays of wealth and power. Once again, it is a facet of public office-holding for which his wife possesses a natural talent. Speaking to Lady Glencora, the duke 'fear[s] she has got some idea into her head of astounding the world through display' and 'conquering the world by graciousness and hospitality' (p.153). Although the duke seeks to present his wife's constant entertaining as vain ostentation and 'sheer display' (p.161), Trollope leaves the reader in little doubt that Palliser's failure to forge a public persona as part of his premiership is detrimental to both his political and masculine authority. Thus, whilst the duke dreams of a private, domestic existence, 'Lady Glencora […] was Prime Minister rather than himself' (pp.149-50) and her authority comes from connections made during distinctly neo-classical-style gatherings among 'the portico, and the marbles and the huge pile of stone' (p.160) that is the family's country seat. The duchess adopts the public, authoritative role and, as such, is associated more closely with classical symbols of grandeur, whilst her husband's failing authority sees him confined more and more to domestic spaces. The fact that the duchess is so successful in playing the role of Caesar's wife only serves to highlight Palliser's own failure to embody successfully the energetic, Caesar-like values of Liberal manliness.

Rather, Palliser's ill-ease in embodying the Caesarean model of the public man results in his 'becoming autocratic and peevishly imperious' (p.355), destroying any hope

of his forging a popular public image built on his own personality. That we are meant to view Palliser's imperiousness as a reflection of specifically gendered failings in his political authority, is highlighted further by his wife, who complains that 'Really you are becoming so autocratic that I shall have to go in for women's rights' (p.276). Glencora's threat is double-edged. She suggests that Palliser is both too tyrannical in his premiership, refusing to listen to the advice of reliable counsellors and concerned family, and yet also, that he is lacking in charisma and effectiveness to institute the reforms he proposes. Ironically, he possesses both too much of the Caesarist, autocratic authority of Napoleon and, with his disregard for the power of personality in politics, not enough of it. Trollope manoeuvres the duke into a position whereby the abilities, judgement, and personal qualities which underpin Palliser's paternalistic authority over both his family and over the state, are called into question.

As a way of capturing the essence of the duke's failure and of foreshadowing his inevitable fall, Trollope begins to draw upon the more tragic and ominous aspects of the Caesar parallel, as well as interweaving other equally unsettling Roman narratives into the semantic structures of the novel. The first of these is the recurring parallel with Cincinnatus, the Roman statesman who was consul and dictator of Rome, but who resigned his great offices to retire to a quiet life as a farmer. Whilst Cincinnatus is remembered as a paragon of civic duty, resuming his political offices only when called upon to serve the state, he was also a staunchly patrician statesman, opposed to any extensions of plebeian power. It is a form of statesmanly aloofness which Lady Glencora recognises in her husband, as Palliser becomes more and more withdrawn from society under the pressure of political office. 'He is always Cincinnatus,' she notes, 'going back to his peaches and his ploughs […] He loves to be simple but he does not know how to show the people that he likes it' (pp.541; 537). Furthermore, Glencora worries that 'I think he is becoming a tyrant with his own men' (p.541). This tyranny, coupled with Palliser's inability to connect with

the public, is highlighted further by means of a more foreboding Roman parallel – Coriolanus.

Caius Martius Coriolanus was a semi-mythological Roman general, best known to the Victorians from Shakespeare's play, which enjoyed an 'unprecedented number of revivals'[152] in the years between 1819 and 1915. Despite his manifold virtues as a general and statesman, Coriolanus's scorn for the people ultimately leads to his death. It is a stark warning about the need to cultivate political friendships and a popular public image, but one which falls upon deaf ears when, once again, Lady Glencora expresses it to her husband:

> When a man wants to be Prime Minister he has to submit to vulgarity, and must give up his ambitions if the task be too disagreeable to him. The Duchess thought that that had been understood, at any rate since the days of Coriolanus. (p.164)

By evoking the tragic narrative of Coriolanus, Trollope foreshadows the imminent downfall of Plantagenet Palliser. Furthermore, he frames that downfall as a consequence of the duke's misguided sense of what political authority entails and what it demands of the statesman. By cleaving so narrow-mindedly to the notion of the plain-speaking, non-performative statesman that emerged after Waterloo in opposition to more performative Napoleonic masculinity and its associated cult of personality, Palliser alienates himself from both his peers and from the people. He becomes a modern-day Coriolanus and fails to live up to the positive model of Caesar-like energy that Trollope associates most fervently with Mr Gresham in the novels, and with Gladstone in life. Yet despite possessing a multitude of classical failings, Palliser's overarching flaw is that he will not consciously comprehend and internalize the lessons of the Roman past. He does not want to apply Rome to his own political identity and situation, and will not learn from the political errors

[152] John Ripley, *Coriolanus on Stage in England and America, 1609-1994* (London: Associated University Press, 1998), p.160.

of Roman statesmen until it is too late. Palliser's failure therefore becomes emblematic for Trollope of the failure of the political classes to engage in a meaningful way with Rome in political discourse of the 1860s and 70s.

In accordance with this failure of masculine and political energy, Palliser's final weeks in office are conspicuous as a period of stillness and stagnation wherein his wife wonders 'how everything has become so quiet that I cannot imagine that Plantagenet is still in office' (p.541). As it becomes evident to the reader that the Prime Minister's position is untenable and his want of energy and authority irredeemable, so too does Trollope begin to evoke the more troubling and tragic aspects of the Caesar parallel as a means of signalling the imminent, though metaphorical 'death' of Palliser's primacy. In true tragic fashion, Palliser's fall comes as a result of his own hubris. When it is suggested he give up his office and serve the Liberal party as a member of the Council, the duke replies: 'I don't think I could do that [...] Caesar could hardly have led a legion under Pompey' (p.620). He refers to the rivalry between Julius Caesar and Pompey Magnus which resulted in the dissolution of the first triumvirate in 53BC and in civil war, with each man fighting for political and military supremacy. This is the first time that Palliser has openly styled himself as a Caesar, and also the first time that his personal pride has outweighed his desire to serve the state. It is a statement he will repeat, ponder and regret five more times before the end of the novel, and signposts a downward spiral of delusional pride in his own political authority. Likewise, the speeches of the duke's most loyal supporter, Phineas Finn, begin to take on a Brutus-like air of discontent. Finn warns of the duke's vehement refusal to participate in the public appearances required of his office: 'You can't be really loyal to a king if you never see him, – if he be always locked up in some almost divine recess' (p.230). The subtext of Trollope's more negative formulation of Palliser as Caesar is that the duke must inevitably suffer a metaphorical political death – akin to the murder of the Roman dictator – as a punishment for his hubris.

The great irony of Palliser's fall, itself the result of his failure to embrace a public, performative persona, is that he eventually comes to conceptualize his demise as a tragic, quasi-theatrical calamity. 'The play has been played', Palliser laments after resigning his office; 'and the curtain has fallen, and the lights are being put out, and the poor weary actors may go home to bed' (p.631). He leaves office not like the true Caesar of history, but like an actor who has finished playing at Caesar-like styles of political authority. Palliser recognises too late the centrality of personality, performance and energy as integral parts of political masculinity, or at least political manliness after the more positive Caesarean model established by Trollope in the *Commentaries*. *The Prime Minister* ends with the concession 'that Caesar would at some future time, be prepared to serve under a Pompey,' and, in the final line, with Palliser's determination 'to look forward to a time when I may again be of some humble use' (p.691) to the state. In this final sentiment of self-effacing service to the state, Palliser begins his transition back towards a more conservative, Ciceronian style of manliness which will continue throughout the rest of the Palliser novels. In his 1881 *Life of Cicero,* Trollope contrasts the Ciceronian model of selfless statesmanship with the robust, but ultimately selfish energies of Caesar, Marius and Sulla. He concludes that Cicero was 'ambitious for the good of others, while these men had desired power only for themselves'.[153] To be a Cicero meant the laying aside of one's personal political ambitions in order to defend the long-established traditions of the state. For Plantagenet Palliser, then, the Ciceronian example functions as an ideological safe haven from the humiliation of defeat. It is both masculine and constitutional in nature, though implicitly conservative.

The transition from Caesar to Cicero is not an easy one for Palliser, who fluctuates between feelings of resentment at having to resign his office, and shame at having styled himself so openly as a dictator-figure. His main regret, however, is not that he should have

[153] Trollope, *Life of Cicero*, p.3.

felt himself to be a Caesar, – after all, as we have seen, the Caesarean model of manliness was coming to be associated with Liberal values – but rather that he should have 'been foolish enough to express' (p.667) such an affinity so openly. His failure is a failure to process consciously and internalize the lessons of Roman statesmanship, and thereby to become a more self-aware and successful political male. Furthermore, Palliser is emblematic of a much wider problem of Roman reception in political discourse of the 1860s and 1870s. There is a suggestion of resentment, both from Palliser and from Trollope himself, at the hypocrisy of British political culture for which ancient Rome provided a relevant and necessary framework for talking about political values, for articulating partisan ideologies, and for constructing political masculinities, but which remained hesitant about drawing too overtly on Roman parallels for fear of the lingering associations of republicanism and Napoleonic Caesarism.

In this chapter I have suggested that the Roman parallel became too radicalized for use in political debate at the height of the reform movement as a result of French receptions of the Roman past in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Reclaiming the Roman parallel in the immediate aftermath of Waterloo, and French attempts to cast Britain as the Carthage of France's Rome, was crucial but by no means an uncomplicated process in the construction of British political manliness. Yet the lingering associations of radical agitation and popular violence meant that the Roman parallel was quickly omitted from political discourse as debates about the speed and scale of political reform gathered pace and Britain underwent a shift away from Wellingtonian ideals of masculinity which were rooted in notions of military virtue and service, towards more non-violent styles of political manliness. By the 1860s, however, the works of Anthony Trollope demonstrate that the more radical associations of the Roman parallel had mellowed and that there was a gradual, if frustratingly slow, re-adoption of Roman references by the political elites. But if the statesmen of the nation were hesitant in using

Rome to frame domestic political conflict, then, as I shall demonstrate in the next chapter, the martial sphere of empire could embrace the Roman parallel much more easily. If the houses of parliament could not be unproblematically compared to the senate house and the forum, the Roman general could stand for the hardy, acquisitive values of the New Imperialist.

Chapter Three

The Roman Empire and the New Imperialist

In his 1891 article, 'A Note on the New Imperialism', Charles Grey Robertson condemns the kinds of political masculinity described in the previous chapter in favour of a more robust ideal of imperial manliness:

> His energy alone were [*sic*] enough to distinguish the Imperialist from the old Conservative of thirty years ago. The policy of masterly inactivity, the spirit of timid and passive opposition has no charms for him. Where they were for risking nothing and resting on their oars and admiring the trophies won by their fathers, he sees that to stand still is impossible. The law of organic life admits no exceptions. Where there is not growth there must be decay: the Empire must either advance or fall back.[154]

The New Imperialist, according to Robertson's formulation, is characterised by his energy, adaptability and an assertive, even aggressively expansionist agenda conceived of here in suggestively Darwinian terms. Indeed, his reference to 'the law of organic life' is presumably a reference to a work of the same title by Erasmus Darwin, which prefigures many of the evolutionary theories of his more famous grandson, Charles.[155] Robertson reinterprets and repurposes Darwinian ideas into a framework of masculine conflict and competition, promulgating a binary whereby the empire must be conceived of as being always either in a state of conflict and expansion or else degeneration and decline. Such a model would help to explain New Imperialist impatience with the masculine ideals of previous generations, which advocated commercial, mercantile endeavours over militaristic ones but which, to Robertson, looked like timidity and passivity on the part of the administrators and traders of the East India Company. Even the metaphor of previous generations of imperial administrators 'resting on their oars' evokes the mercantile, maritime nature of empire and imperial manliness in the eighteenth and early nineteenth

[154] Charles Grey Robertson, 'A Note on the New Imperialism', *Time* (March 1891), pp.227-233 (p.231). Hereafter cited parenthetically.
[155] See Erasmus Darwin, *Zoonomia; or The Laws of Organic Life* (London: J. Johnson, 1974).

centuries. However, for Robertson, the 'rough manliness' (p.229) of what is now referred to as the high imperial period of the 1870s-1914, is tempered and restrained by the lessons and precedents of history. 'Imperialism', he writes, 'is for action, but always on the lines that have led to success and prosperity in the past. [The Imperialist's] love of strenuousness is governed by his respect for history. It is, indeed, the historical spirit which on his side gives its whole colour to the movement' (p.229). The problem that writers, commentators and imperial administrators were forced to consider throughout the time of imperial expansion in the nineteenth century was precisely which 'pasts' should be used to best define and validate British colonial rule. Which historical parallels would be stable enough to justify Britain's continued expansion and dominance in the east, and to articulate the manly virtues of the men who expanded and administrated such an empire?

It becomes clear that the British empire in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was transformed from a naval, commercialist enterprise, for which ancient Greece and the maritime Athenian empire proved a much more fitting parallel, to an expansionist, land-based project which drew increasingly on Roman models. This transformation is both catalysed and characterised by a shift away from the mercantile manliness of previous centuries, towards the privileging of militaristic masculinities more in keeping with a robust, expanding empire. The New Imperialist was no merchant, but an imperator. By canvassing some of the major cultural intersections between empire, gender and the classical tradition I account for why, by the high imperial period of 1870s-1914, it had become difficult to speak of empire and imperial masculinities, without resorting to the Roman parallel. In her recently-published work *Britain and Its Empire in the Shadow of Rome* (2012), Sarah Butler examines the importance of ancient Rome for British imperial ideologies. She states that 'Rome became the principal model for many of those actively involved in the running

of Britain and the empire.'[156] Where Butler's focus is primarily on the socio-political and historical discourses of the period, however, I chart the valency of the Roman parallel in literary texts about empire.

Historical novels such as Wilkie Collins's *Antonina, or the Fall of Rome* (1850) encapsulate mid-century ideas about the civilizing mission of empire. The Roman parallel is used tentatively at this point, and is usually tempered with allusions to ancient Greek or Teutonic civilizations in order to figure British imperial authority as essentially paternalistic, in both racial and cultural terms. By the closing decades of the century, however, Rome eclipses both Greek and Germanic pasts as a model for figuring ideal imperial masculinity. This is most apparent in late-Victorian writing about Egypt. Britain's newest imperial acquisition in 1882 was also, significantly, the backdrop for ancient Rome's triumph over the east and over Egypt's most famous queen, Cleopatra. Henry Rider Haggard's novel *Cleopatra* (1889) and the various stories now referred to collectively as 'Mummy Fiction', dramatize the extent to which British imperial identity and experience had become aligned with Roman examples by the end of the century. The New Imperialist is cast as a modern-day Caesar or Antony in his relationship with empire, as territorial and sexual desires become conflated and focussed on the figure of Cleopatra herself.

By the end of the century the Roman parallel was central to New Imperialist configurations of manliness, but it was not an entirely unproblematic model. If Rome proved a useful framework for talking about imperial authority and masculinity, so too did it imply uncomfortable narratives of the decline and fall of empire which date back to antiquity but which had been cemented in the Victorian cultural consciousness by Edward Gibbon.[157] Ironically Rome, like the Queen of Egypt who was its most famous conquest,

[156] Sarah J. Butler, *Britain and Its Empire in the Shadow of Rome: The Reception of Rome in Socio-Political Debate from the 1850s to the 1920s* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), p.5.
[157] See Edward Gibbon, *A History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-89). There were numerous editions of Gibbon's work produced throughout the nineteenth century, most significantly, those

although crucial for New Imperialist notions of manliness, had to be simultaneously embraced and rejected, utilized and jettisoned as a straightforward example of imperial success.

3.1 From Greece to Rome: The British Empire and the Classics

As Kostas Vlassopoulos has noted, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw ancient Rome becoming an increasingly ill-fitting vehicle for talking about empire. Attempts by France and Spain to forge universal monarchies in Europe had proven unsuccessful and it seemed that a Roman-style empire, with one European nation asserting dominance over the rest, could no longer exist on the same terms or in the same spaces.[158] Any imperial conquests had now to be made outside of Europe and, by the eighteenth century and the waning of British power in the Americas, this meant looking to the east and to commerce, rather than conquest, as a model for empire. The success of the East India Company, particularly after the decisive victory at Plassey in 1757, helped to promote a commercialist identity for the British Empire. Indeed, the commentator Adam Anderson noted in 1787 that:

> To the instrumentality of Commerce alone the Britannic Empire is, most peculiarly, indebted for its opulence and grandeur; its improvements in arts and knowledge; and, in general, for the bulk of its solid comforts and conveniences.[159]

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by Longman and Co. (1848), two editions by John Murray (1838-39; 1862), and by Chatto and Windus (1875). Further editions appeared in 1875, 1876, 1880 and 1896-1900.

[158] On the problems of the Roman parallel in the First British Empire see Kostas Vlassopoulos, 'Imperial Encounters: Discourses on Empire and the Uses of Ancient History During the Eighteenth Century', in *Classics and Imperialism in the British Empire*, ed. by Mark Bradley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp.29-53 (esp. pp.30-36); see also Saree Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), esp. pp.154-172 for more on the concept of universal monarchy in Romantic culture.

[159] Adam Anderson, *An Historic and Chronological Deduction of the Origin of Commerce, From the Early Accounts, Containing An History of the Great Commercial Interests of the British Empire*, 4 vols. (London, 1787), I:xvi.

Anderson was just one of many thinkers and writers emphasizing the interconnectedness of empire and commerce in public and parliamentary discourses of the period, as well as in literature, popular fiction, poetry and drama.[160] The result for contemporary constructions of masculinity was a privileging of a distinctly mercantile manliness which the parallel with war-like Rome could not easily accommodate. 'By the superiority of their arms and their discipline, the Romans subdued the nations of the earth,' writes one reviewer of Dr Gillies' 1786 *History of Ancient Greece*; 'But the Athenians afford the only example of a people, who, by the virtues of the mind alone, acquired an extensive dominion over men'.[161] The Greek accomplishment is widely attributed to what the reviewer, summarizing Gillies, calls 'the inborn vigour of mind […] virtue, and of heroism'[162] of the Athenian citizenry.

Accordingly, images like this anonymous etching entitled 'The Modern Hercules' (1737) capitalized on the Greek tradition – in this case the Farnese Hercules – and the maritime might of classical Athens to heroize an ideal of imperial manliness based on commerciality, morality, administrative ability and civic duty (Fig. 3). The sailor, bearing a note that reads 'I wait for orders', declares his sense of duty to Britain and her navy, which are symbolised by the galleon on the horizon and representative of a much wider cultural interest in maritime masculinities and the collective male experience of those who served their country at sea in this period.[163]

[160] See Vlassopoulos, pp.35-36 and Jack P. Greene, *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), esp. ch. 1: 'The Languages of Commerce, Liberty, Security, and Maritime Supremacy and the Celebration of Empire', pp.20-49.
[161] 'The History of Ancient Greece, its Colonies, and Conquests, from the earliest Accounts till the Division of the Macedonian Empire in the East: including the History of Literature, Philosophy, and the Fine Arts', *Scots Magazine* (February 1786), pp.79-82 (p.81).
[162] 'The History of Ancient Greece, its Colonies, and Conquests', p.81.
[163] On the cultural intersections between war, seascape and empire in this period and the consequent privileging of collective maritime masculinities over the glory of the individual, see Geoff Quilley, *Empire to Nation: Art, History and the Visualization of Maritime Britain 1768-1829* (London: Yale University Press, 2011).

Fig. 3. [Anon.], *The Modern Hercules* (c.1737) Etching and Drypoint, London, British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings, 1874.0808.3590.

The lion skin behind the sailor also features in the Farnese sculpture and is deployed here as a device to elevate the sailor's struggles in the name of commerce to the level of Herculean labours, since the skin is presumably destined for trade in Britain, where it will serve as an emblem of British imperial power after the Greek model. Just as we saw with Anderson, there is an implicit connection made in imagery of this kind between the masculine endeavour of the imperial male out in the empire, and the 'comforts and conveniences' of Britain's domestic spaces where goods like sugar, cotton and spices were displayed or consumed. The Greek parallel becomes central to the formation of a rhetoric of industriousness whereby the material affluence and imperial success of the British nation is guaranteed by the moral fortitude and virtue of its naval and commercial classes.

The privileging of Greece over Rome as a model of imperial masculinity is mirrored in the historical fictions of the early- to mid-nineteenth century. Bulwer-Lytton's *Last Days of Pompeii* (1834), Kingsley's *Hypatia* (1853), and Newman's *Callista* (1855) are all set in remote corners of the Roman Empire, but the heroes and heroines in each case are emphatically Greek. These protagonists are characterized by supreme physical beauty after the Greek fashion, whilst also being culturally and artistically accomplished. Newman's Callista, a sculptress and craftswoman by trade, is the envy of the people in her North African town 'because of her good looks […] and because she is a Greek'.[164] The lovers Glaucus and Ione in *The Last Days of Pompeii* are similarly idealized. Ione is given the epithet of 'the beautiful' and 'has a beauty that Greece itself never excelled […] she is a second Helen.'[165] Of her lover, Glaucus, Bulwer Lytton writes:

> Heaven had given to Glaucus every blessing but one: it had given him beauty, health, fortune, genius, illustrious descent, a heart of fire, a mind of

[164] John Henry Newman, *Callista* (London: Burns, Oates and Co., 1876), p.66.
[165] Edward Bulwer Lytton, *The Last Days of Pompeii* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, [n.d]), p.48.

> poetry; but it had denied him the heritage of freedom. He was born in Athens, the subject of Rome.[166]

As Debbie Challis notes, 'the physical beauty of the ancient Greeks, as evidenced by their art, was used to construct theories of racial difference in the Western world that placed certain "types of mankind" above others in a hierarchy of racial and cultural superiority.'[167] Greece, for many mid-nineteenth-century commentators, represented the apex of western masculinity at a time when the newly-acquired Parthenon marbles were being used to proclaim Britain as the rightful heir to Greek culture, and racial theorists were claiming ancient Greek ancestry for the Anglo-Saxon race.[168] The Hellenic type of physical beauty was presumed to be indicative of elevated moral principles, signalled in these novels, for instance, by the protagonists' willingness to convert to the Christian faith.

By contrast, these paragons of virtue must exist under the decadence and despotism of the Roman empire wherein:

> The world was one vast prison to which the sovereign of Rome was the imperial gaoler; and the very virtues which in the free days of Athens would have made him ambitious, in the slavery of earth made him inactive and supine.[169]

The language of imprisonment and slavery, used here in both the social and spiritual sense, is attached explicitly to the Roman model of empire. Such negative portrayals are characteristic of late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century assessments of the brutality and self-interest of the Roman imperial project which, as one commentator described it, 'Plunder[ed]…the rest of mankind, for the benefit of the Roman people.'[170] Likewise,

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[166] Bulwer Lytton, p.18.
[167] Debbie Challis, 'The Ablest Race: the Ancient Greeks in Victorian Racial Theory' in *Classics and Imperialism in the British Empire*, ed. by Mark Bradley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp.94-120 (p.95).
[168] See Challis, p.99.
[169] Bulwer Lytton, p.130.
[170] *The Late Occurrences in North America, and Policy of Great Britain Considered* (London, 1766), cited in Jack P. Greene, *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp.34-35;37.

Roman slavery was more immediately provocative of racial and religious outrage than its Greek counterpart. Rome's slaves included the more recognisably European races of the Gauls and the Britons, while the blood sports and persecution of Christians proved problematic for Victorian notions of imperial manliness at a time that Howard Temperley has identified with 'the awakening of the Evangelical conscience', [171] abolitionist movements, and the missionary mandate of the British Empire.

Furthermore, the use of the Roman example as a model for empire undermined the aforementioned notions of industriousness and selfless duty which were so embedded in early-Victorian representations of imperial manliness. For instance, in an extended analogy wherein he transposes the social and political institutions of ancient Rome onto Victorian London, Charles Kingsley cannot imagine 'a more fatal change' to British society, empire, and masculinity, than the existence of slavery:

> The free citizens and 'prentices of London; the sturdy labourers of Dorsetshire and the eastern counties; and the skilful artizans of Manchester, Sheffield and Birmingham; the mariners and shipwrights of Liverpool, have been long ago drafted into marching regiments, and have left their bones to bleach beneath Indian suns and Polar snows. Their place has been supplied by countless herds of negro slaves, who till the fields and crowd the workshops of our towns, to the entire exclusion of free labour; for the free population, or rather the miserable relics of them, disdain all manual employment: they divide their time between starvation and a degrading debauchery, the means for which are sedulously provided by the government.[172]

Slavery is not merely the universal opposite and enemy of 'freedom' here, but also of the distinctly mercantile manliness I have been describing. Aside from its obvious moral implications, the notion of Roman-style slavery presents an economic problem for Victorian masculinity in that it undermines the labour market, devaluing the economic and

[171] Howard Temperley, 'March of the Saints', *TLS*, 17 (August 2007), p.8.
[172] Charles Kingsley, The *Roman and the Teuton: A Series of Lectures Delivered Before the University of Cambridge* (London: Macmillan, 1864), p.24.

social worth of the male apprentice, labourer or craftsman. Equally, it means that imperial service, far from being the vocation or duty we saw embodied in the 'Modern Hercules', becomes a question of conscription. The result, according to this rhetoric of imperial masculinity, is an aversion to hard work among the free population and a tendency towards decadence and degeneracy which, according to the traditional Gibbonian trajectory of 'decline and fall', is fatal to both imperial authority and masculine virtue. Rome, then, is not only an 'imperial gaoler'[173] of elevated Greek principles, but also becomes 'the slave of her own slaves,'[174] and far inferior to the Greek model in terms of moral, economic and religious virtue. Thus the Romans themselves appear in these historical fictions as 'fat and bloated things – slaves of luxury – sluggards in thought.'[175]

Wilkie Collins's 1850 novel *Antonina, or The Fall of Rome* is a noteworthy text in this regard since it refuses to engage in such outright vilification of Rome and in the privileging of Greece as a model of imperial, aesthetic and religio-moral manliness. The lovers at the centre of Collins's plot are not Greeks but a Roman maiden and a Gothic warrior, and there is no Christian conversion plot at the heart of the story. Furthermore, Collins openly laments the limited range of other literary genres and cultural forms through which ancient Rome was available for public consumption, and the very narrow meanings assigned to it in those spaces. In his third chapter, entitled 'Rome', Collins anticipates that:

> The title of this chapter will, we fear, excite emotions of apprehension, rather than curiosity in the breasts of experienced readers. They will doubtless imagine that it is portentous of long rhapsodies on those wonders of antiquity, the description of which has long since become absolutely nauseous to them by incessant iteration. They will foresee wailings over

[173] Bulwer Lytton, p.130.
[174] Kingsley, *Roman and the Teuton*, p.29.
[175] Bulwer Lytton, p.136.

> the Palace of the Caesars, and meditations among the arches of the Colosseum.[176]

Similar references to the 'well-worn Forum' and 'exhausted Colosseum' (*Ant.*, p.37) echo Victorian culture's jadedness towards Romantic incarnations of Rome as a stately eternal ruin, an archaeological subject to be described in meticulous detail, a trope from the theatre of Kemble and Garrick, a political image or, most commonly, a recurring subject of travel writing.[177] To this end, Collins promises his readers that *Antonina* will not unfold as 'a long series of weary photographs' (*Ant.*, p.36) such as those brought back by innumerable honeymooners and youths returning from the grand tour. Rather, the novel is a literary manifestation of a growing cultural need to expand the discursive capacity of ancient Rome by the mid-nineteenth century, in response to a period of rapid imperial expansion in the decades immediately preceding its publication. Indeed, the expansion of empire and the demands of administrating an increasingly land-based project, result in the Greek parallel and its associated styles of mercantile manliness becoming an increasingly ill-fitting model of masculinity. What we find instead is a tentative rehabilitation of certain elements of the ancient Roman past which are traceable in political, social and racial discourses of the mid-nineteenth century, as well as in literary texts like Collins's *Antonina.* Rome, as I shall now demonstrate, is used to inform imperial policy and to legitimize new ideals of liberal imperial manliness which promote notions of paternalism and British racial hybridity as sources of imperial authority.

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[176] Wilkie Collins, *Antonina; or, The Fall of Rome* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1905), p.36. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *Ant*.

[177] See Philip Ayres, *Classical Culture and the Idea of Rome in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) for more on eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century incarnations of Rome in the British imagination. See also Robert K. Martin and Leland S. Person, eds., *Roman Holidays: American Writers and Artists in Nineteenth-Century Italy* (Iowa City: Iowa University Press, 2002), for a nineteenth-century American perspective on Rome as a subject of art and travel writing.

3.2 The Roman, the Teuton and the Rise of the Imperial Father, 1840 - 1876

From around 1840, the British Empire expanded at an accelerated rate, with territories in Sind, Natal, the Punjab and Gambia annexed in quick succession.[178] Britain now faced the challenge of governing a multitude of races and peoples as part of an increasingly land-based empire. It was no longer enough for the British imperialist to be a merchant driven by commercial imperatives. He was increasingly expected to be the defender and enforcer of the civilizing mission of empire, which had been conceptualized at various periods in British history as a political, economic, abolitionist or Evangelical duty; but which came to be framed by writers like Thomas Macaulay and Charles Trevelyan as an educational project. Macaulay said in his 'Minute on Indian Education' (1835) that 'We have to educate a people who cannot be educated by means of their mother tongue'. He insisted that it should not be the case that 'when a nation of high intellectual attainments undertakes to superintend the education of a nation comparatively ignorant, the learners are absolutely to prescribe the course which is to be taken by the teachers.'[179] The liberal imperialist of the mid-nineteenth century, then, was a distinctly paternalistic figure.[180] He was in many ways a brother to John Tosh's 'domestic male' of the same period, and a development of that 'Evangelical strand of Christianity [which] had strongly endorsed patriarchal authority. It had played up the all-seeing, all-judging power of God, and then cast the household head in the role of his earthly representative.'[181] In place of a household, however, pro-imperial discourse at this time draws on the Roman parallel to celebrate and sanitize the authority of

[178] See Edith Hall, 'British Refractions of India and the 1857 "Mutiny" Through the Prism of Ancient Greece and Rome', in *India, Greece and Rome 1757-2007*, ed. by Edith Hall and Phiroze Vasunia (London: Institute of Classical Studies, School of Advanced Studies, University of London, 2010), pp.33-50 (p.33) on the 'breakneck speed' of annexation in this decade.
[179] Thomas Macaulay, 'Indian Education: Minute of the 2nd of February, 1835', in *Macaulay: Prose and Poetry*, ed. by G.M. Young (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp.719-730 (p.726; 728).
[180] For more on the paternalism of the liberal imperial project see Rama Sundari Mantena, 'Imperial Ideology and the Uses of Rome in Discourses on Britain's Indian Empire', in *Classics and Imperialism in the British Empire*, ed. by Mark Bradley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp.54-73 (pp.66-67).
[181] John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (London: Yale University Press, 1999), p.147.

the Liberal Imperialist as the *paterfamilias* of empire. The British imperialist was required to educate his imperial subjects in much the same fashion that the Caesar-like headmasters of schoolboy fiction were required to civilize and educate their 'barbarian' boarders. But it was an education that was to be conducted firmly on Britain's terms: privileging western knowledge, language and customs, and incorporating the imperial subject, often in a junior capacity, into western power structures.

The liberal imperialist's duty to 'Anglicize' the empire was openly acknowledged among commentators and policy-makers to have derived from Roman models of imperial governance, and was justified through reference to that same classical past. As Charles Trevelyan put it in his 1838 work *On the Education of the Peoples of India*:

> The Romans at once civilized the nations of Europe, and attached them to their rule by Romanizing them; or, in other words, by educating them in Roman literature and the arts, and teaching them to emulate their conquerors instead of opposing them.[182]

The success with which ancient Rome acculturated and assimilated new peoples and populations supplied to imperialist discourse valuable narratives with which to emphasize the benefits of imperial rule for both the colonial power and the subject peoples of empire, as well as humanity more broadly:

> The Roman language and literature, thus enriched and improved, was destined to still prouder triumphs. The inhabitants of the greatest part of Europe and of the North of Africa, educated in every respect like the Romans, became in every respect equal to them. The impression which was then made will never be effaced. It sank so deep into the language and habits of the people, that Latin to this day forms the basis of the tongues of France and southern Europe, and the Roman law the basis of their jurisprudence. The barbarous hordes which triumphed over the arms, yielded to the arts of Rome.[183]

[182] Charles Trevelyan, *On the Education of the People of India* (London: Longman, 1838), pp.196-97.
[183] Trevelyan, p.39.

As in Macaulay's 'Minute', the liberal imperialist is presented as a harbinger of advanced culture, education, and language. His relationship with his imperial subjects is couched not in the language of repression, aggression or exploitation, but framed as that of a teacher towards a pupil. The teacher/father metaphor and the associated vocabulary of attachment and emulation encode into the Roman parallel a promise of submission and child-like dependency from Britain's imperial subjects. It is a rhetoric designed to encourage submission and compliance from the peoples of empire with the promise of equality and eventual independence, whilst simultaneously perpetuating indefinitely those same imperial hegemonies that it promises one day to collapse.

By extension, the masculine authority of the liberal imperialist as a teacher-figure in the discourses of empire required the Indian or African subject to be depicted as child-like at both an individual and cultural level. The historian Thomas Rice Holmes, for instance, looking back on the 1850s from a post-mutiny perspective, described the Indian races as being: 'like schoolboys who, though prepared to reverence authority, must find a vent for their inbred love of mischief when they feel their master is powerless to control them.'[184] Holmes's use of the schoolboy simile carries with it the insinuation that 'civilized' Britain, and her white male representative, should remain 'master' over the Indian nation for the immediate present, but also implies a distant future wherein the mischievous Indian will have acquired the knowledge and maturity to advance to terms of equality with his teacher. Charles Trevelyan was drawing on the same model of colonial relationships when he wrote that 'no effort of policy can prevent the natives from ultimately regaining their independence.'[185] As we have seen already, however, it was a promise of a future equality to be won by submission in the present to the imperial authority of the British male, as well

[184] Thomas Rice Holmes, *History of the Indian Mutiny and of the Disturbances Which Accompanied It Among the Civic Population* (London: W.H. Allen and Co., 1883), p.558. Rice's other works include *Caesar's Conquest of Gaul* (1899); *Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar* (1907); and *The Roman Republic and the Founder of the Empire* (1923).
[185] Trevelyan, p.193.

as the cultural authority of western knowledge and the English language. Just as Tom Brown must learn to accept the wisdom and defer to the superior masculine authority of Arnold in the headmaster's microcosmic 'little corner of the British Empire which is thoroughly, wisely, and strongly ruled',[186] the colonial subject was taught to accept his present juvenility in British hierarchies as a route to attaining seniority in some distant future.

Britain's own past as a subject of the Roman Empire served as a particularly powerful validation of this narrative of political and cultural submission as the route to advanced civilization. After all, as Trevelyan notes:

> The Indians will, I hope, soon stand in the same position towards us in which we once stood to the Romans. Tacitus informs us, that it was the policy of Julius Agricola to instruct the sons of the leading men among the Britons in the literature and science of Rome, and to give them a taste for the refinements of Roman civilization. We all know how well this plan answered. From being obstinate enemies, the Britons soon became attached and confiding friends; and they made more strenuous efforts to retain the Romans, than their ancestors had done to resist their invasion.[187]

The subtext of Trevelyan's comparison is that Britain's cultural credentials for imperial rule are the product of allowing herself to be Romanized at an earlier stage in her history. Likewise, liberal imperialist masculinity is rooted in the Victorian male's role as teacher and in his paternalistic governance not only over the spaces of empire, but also over the civilizing mission. It is hardly surprising in this context that Latin texts which deal with the Roman Empire, and especially the Roman Empire in Britain, become increasingly popular in this period as part of this perceived mandate of the civilizing mission. Trevelyan refers explicitly to Tacitus's account of his father-in-law's governorship of Britain between AD77 and AD85 and this text, along with others like Virgil's *Aeneid*, were reprinted and reissued

[186] Hughes, p.355. Hughes published *Tom Brown's Schooldays* in April 1857, less than one month before the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny which marked the beginning of major shifts in imperial ideology and how it conceptualized relationships with the peoples of empire.
[187] Trevelyan, pp.196-197. See also Mantena, p.58.

with increasing regularity from around 1840.[188] These works, which focus primarily on the manly virtues and *pietas* of their respective protagonists, provided a framework for constructing imperial relationships whilst simultaneously ensuring the continued circumscription of who was authorized to speak about empire. Classical literature, despite the Anglicization of imperial subjects, remained the province of white male elites who, according to Richard Hingley, maintained 'a circular process of interpretation…in which the past was used to provide lessons for the present and this resulted in the creation of a relevant and useful past.'[189] The Roman example, with its proven record of success in the education and acculturation of subject peoples, allowed for the privileging of paternalistic models of masculine authority which the parallel with mercantile Greece could not readily accommodate by mid-century.

As well as providing a model for Britain's imperial policy of Anglicization, these texts, which deal with the relationship between the Roman Empire and her subjects, were also used to articulate a style of national and masculine identity based on notions of racial hybridity. Virgil's *Aeneid,* although it had long been considered inferior to the great works of Homer by Victorian critics, 'struck more of a cultural chord during the rise of British imperialism'.[190] Virgil, writing in the era of Augustus, had undertaken a retrospective re-planting of Rome's racial and national roots in order to construct a narrative of imperial destiny for the Roman people. The culmination of this endeavour comes in the sixth book when Aeneas, having landed in Italy, visits the underworld and meets not only his own deceased loved ones, but a procession of great Roman statesmen – the greatest of these

[188] See Mark Bradley, 'Tacitus's *Agricola* and the Conquest of Britain', in *Classics and Imperialism in the British Empire*, ed. by Mark Bradley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp.123-157. Bradley notes that there were 'at least fifteen British school and university editions of the text and no fewer than ten translations' (p.143) of the Agricola published between 1820 and 1940.
[189] Richard Hingley, *Roman Officers and English Gentlemen: The Imperial Origins of Roman Archaeology* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp.1-2.
[190] Stephen Harrison, 'Virgilian Contexts', in *A Companion to Classical Receptions,* ed. by Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), pp.113-126 (p.113). See also Phiroze Vasaunia, 'Virgil and the British Empire', in *Lineages of Empire: The Historical Roots of British Imperial Thought* , ed. by Duncan Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp.83-116.

being the first emperor Augustus – who have yet to be born. The existence of these great Romans, and of the empire itself, will depend on Aeneas fulfilling his duty to the gods by combining his own Trojan bloodlines with those of the Latin peoples of Italy, and thereby founding the Roman race. Aeneas, then, is the prototypical imperial father of western literature. The increasing popularity of the *Aeneid* in mid-Victorian culture speaks to a growing impulse to mythologize the racial and cultural heritage of the British imperial race.

Tacitus's *Agricola* constituted an even more directly relevant model of racial and cultural hybridity for Victorian readers, chiefly because of the inclusion of the Briton Calgacus as a credible model of heroic masculinity alongside the noble Roman Agricola. As Dylan Sailor explains, 'the *Agricola* imagines its own task as the proper management of reputations'.[191] In particular, Tacitus sought to glorify his father-in-law's achievements as governor of Britain, and his virtue even under the despotic rule of the emperor Domitian. Agricola's status as a man of action and virtue is encoded, as Thomas Späth notes, in the semantic structures of the text. Over two thirds of the verbs in the text refer to Agricola himself as their subject, marking him out as an energetic servant of empire, whose efforts and virtue are deployed in selfless service to an imperial ideal which transcends fealty to any individual emperor.[192] Yet Tacitus offers a surprisingly heroic portrayal of Calgacus, the leader of the Caledonians who oppose the Roman forces at the battle of Mons Graupius. In his eloquent and energetic speech to his troops before the battle, Calgacus articulates strongly anti-imperial sentiments, and defiance of the Roman imperial project:

> Robbers of the world, having by their universal plunder exhausted the land, they rifle the deep. If the enemy be rich, they are rapacious; if he be poor, they lust for dominion; neither the east nor the west has been able to satisfy them. Alone among men they covet with equal eagerness poverty and riches.

[191] Dylan Sailor, 'The Agricola' in *A Companion to Tacitus*, ed. by Victoria Emma Pagán (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp.23-44 (p.26).
[192] Thomas Späth, 'Masculinity and Gender Performance in Tacitus' in *A Companion to Tacitus*, ed. by Victoria Emma Pagán (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp.431-457 (p.439).

> To robbery, slaughter, plunder, they give the lying name of empire; they make a solitude and call it peace.

In many ways Calgacus fits the Tacitean model of virtue which sees commanders, especially military commanders, prepared to die in the name of duty.[193] Yet he is a necessarily tragic figure in Tacitus's formulation: for all his personal heroism, Calgacus has failed to recognize and understand the benefits of Romanization for himself and his people.

British readers, however, were not required to choose between Agricola or Calgacus. As the cultural heirs of the Roman empire and the racial heirs of the 'Britons, […] Gauls [and] the rest of the Germans'[194] whom Calgucus hopes to unite behind him, Victorian readers could cherry-pick the best and most useful parts of the Roman imperial past and combine these with courage and fortitude of the Teutonic races.[195] Thus could mid-century commentators avoid simultaneously the problems of decline and degeneracy that were part of the Roman parallel, whilst simultaneously avoiding the problem of uncivilized or barbaric masculinity in Britain's Teutonic past. Whilst Mantena correctly observes that ancient Rome was never 'an absolute model for empire',[196] Britain's own history as a subject of the Roman empire actually enabled a much more useful narrative of racial and cultural hybridity as the credentials for imperial authority.

It is within this context of liberal imperialist discourse that we can understand the portrayal of masculinity in Wilkie Collins's *Antonina* which, as we have seen already, is so markedly different from the Roman fictions of Kingsley and Newman in its treatment of gender ideals. I suggest that Collins's first published novel is enacting a mythologization of the British imperial race – as Virgil's *Aeneid* did for Romans under Augustus – and specifically of the racially hybrid 'imperial father'-figure of empire.

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[193] For more on Tacitean masculinity see Späth, p.434.
[194] Tacitus, 'Agricola', in *The Agricola and the Germania*, trans. by H. Mattingly and S.A. Handford (London: Penguin, 1970), p.83.
[195] See Bradley, pp.143-144 for more on Tacitus's Victorian readership.
[196] Mantena, p.70.

Set in AD408, the novel takes place during the invasion of Rome by the Goths under Alaric. The Roman court has grown decadent, lethargic and unmasculine on the spoils of empire. Installed in a palace at Ravenna, it is ruled over by the 'pitiably effeminate' (*Ant.* p.19) boy-emperor Honorius, whose days are spent feeding Rome's chickens rather than defending his empire from the Gothic invasions. In Rome itself, the young maiden Antonina struggles to resist the vices of her time but, as the city falls, finds herself captured by Hermanric, the greatest warrior among the Goths. Hermanric possesses all the martial prowess of his race, but little of the Gothic brutality and bloodlust which have consumed his sister, Goisvintha, after the murder of her husband and child. Rather than kill Antonina, Hermanric installs her in an abandoned farmhouse outside the city walls, where the pair live a kind of Edenic domestic existence, with Hermanric leaving to fight each morning and returning each evening to his love and the comforts of home. The lovers embody not only a mid-century domestic ideal based on sexual complementarity, but also the promise of a perfect race of children who would possess the better qualities of both the Roman and the Gothic races with few of the weaknesses.[197] The dream is short-lived, however, when Goisvintha betrays the young couple in revenge for what she perceives to be her brother's rejection of Gothic national values and standards of masculine virtue. Hermanric's death follows swiftly on the heels of his symbolic emasculation in the form of the severing of his sword hand. Rome is sacked and Antonina returns to her father, a shining example of virtue and imperial promise to the religious fanatics and degenerates who still inhabit the city.

Taken separately, neither the Goths nor the Romans in the novel can supply a Victorian readership with a wholly comfortable example of imperial success, or a set of masculine traits that would be stable enough to accommodate the liberal imperialist ideologies I have been describing. When describing the Roman elites, grown weak and lethargic on the spoils of empire, Collins uses the vocabulary of infirmity, imbecility,

[197] For more on masculinity and the ideal of domesticity see Tosh, *A Man's Place*, pp.27-50.

senility and infancy to negate any hint of robust masculinity in this race, which has degenerated as its empire has grown decadent. At the opposite extreme, standards of Gothic manliness are so grimly militaristic that a man who is incapable of bearing arms is refused the right to a place in society and even to life itself. Indeed, after the death of her child, Goisvintha resigns herself 'without an exclamation or a tear' to the harsh reality that her son 'could never have fought with the warriors! Our ancestors slew themselves when they were no longer vigorous for the fight. It is better that he has died!' (p.15). Alaric's boast that, once his armies have taken Rome, 'I will make patricians, epicures, Romans of them!' (p.322), also seems to hint at the inevitable decline of the Goths after the fashion of the Romans, should they succeed in overthrowing the empire. Gothic victory, it seems, will not bring balance and moderation between these two nations, or the polarized styles of masculinity they represent.

The novel's rejection of a purely Roman or purely Gothic masculinity is echoed in the landscapes to which Collins confines each race. The harsh terrain of the Italian Alps, where the Gothic armies are massing ahead of their assault on Rome, is a direct reflection of the character of the invaders, and the hardness and brutality which exist at the core of their culture and gender ideals:

> No brightness gleamed from their armour; no banners waved over their heads; no music sounded among their ranks [...] all that the appearance of the Goths had of solemnity in itself, was in awful harmony with the cold and mournful aspect that the face of Nature had assumed. Silent – menacing – dark, – the army looked the fit embodiment of its leader's tremendous purpose – the subjugation of Rome. (pp.6-7)

In Ravenna too the physical environment of the palace which sits at the centre of the Roman empire is described by Collins in terms that echo the masculine virtues – or lack thereof – of the Roman elites in AD408. 'No brilliant light', we are told, 'mars the pervading softness of the atmosphere; no violent colour materialises the light, ethereal hues

of the dresses; no sudden noises interrupt the fitful and plaintive notes of the lute' (p.22). The courtiers cannot tolerate even small sensory bombardments, let alone resist the imminent military assault from the Goths.

Neither the Romans, with their effeminate boy-emperor, nor the Goths seem likely to perpetuate themselves as a race for very much longer. Indeed, the novel begins in the barren landscape of the Alps, with the death of Goisvintha's last remaining son. The boy's death shatters his mother's dream that she was 'destined to be the mother of a race of heroes' (p.9). Goisvintha, as a fearsome defender of Gothic culture and racial purity, will never become an Aeneas-like progenitor of an imperial race. In the broader historical sense, the death of the child who would have been heir to the brutal customs of the Goths, marks the death knell for the less civilized societies of ancient Europe and the imminent arrival of a more modern, civilized age. In AD408, neither race in isolation can supply a set of gender traits stable enough to catalyse and characterise the modern, civilized world which Collins's readers would recognize as their own. For this, readers must look to the heirs of Hermanric and Antonina, who would inherit at both a biological and cultural level the civilization of the Roman Empire coupled with Gothic standards of physical manliness. It is precisely this Romano-Germanic racial hybridity that writers and historians of the mid-nineteenth century had begun to celebrate as distinctly British.

Antonina, we are told, has spent much of her life isolated from society, confined to the domestic sphere and cut off from the most decadent excesses of Roman culture by her father, who has forbidden her 'to enter a theatre, to look on sculpture, to read poetry, to listen to music' (p.32). Her upbringing at the hands of a puritanical father is excessively strict, but it has helped to preserve in Antonina 'the Old Roman spirit' (p.320) and the dutiful, self-sacrificing kind of femininity more characteristic of Livy's early Roman maidens than the 'listless' (p.21), 'languid' (p.22) women of Collins's fifth-century court.

Antonina has almost no memory of her mother, but what she has gained from that brief maternal relationship is a 'love of music' (p.69), which she must practice in secret so as not to offend her father's severe Christian convictions. Collins removes his heroine from the more fanatical religious ideologies embodied by Antonina's father and the pagan priest Ulpius. In so doing he is able to allocate to her the role of representing the cultural and artistic accomplishments of ancient Roman civilization before its descent into decadence, as well as ascribing to her all the virtues of piety, domesticity and self-restraint traditionally praised in Victorian ideals of femininity. These are qualities which Antonina would pass on, both biologically and culturally, to any children she might bear.

Where Collins disassociates Antonina from the negative associations of Roman decadence and decline, so too is Hermanric distanced from the more brutal aspects of Gothic civilization. Hermanric's masculine qualities, though they are, as we shall see, a source of emotional crisis and conflicted identity for the warrior in AD408, would have been instantly recognisable to a nineteenth-century reader as idealized gender traits. The physical appeal of the Goth is not lost on Antonina who, when she is first brought before Hermanric, is struck by 'the manly and powerful frame of the young warrior, clothed as it was in the accoutrements of his war-like nation' (p.136). 'You are not like the soldiers of Rome', she observes to her captor; '– you are taller, stronger, more gloriously arrayed [...] you have a look of conquest and a presence of command' (p.136). Even his name – his identity as it is signified in language – seems to denote masculinity, being stern, solemn and 'a name for a warrior and a man' (p.136). Hermanric is not held up as a paragon of masculine virtue in the novel solely on account of his physical prowess, but also for his 'almost sublime' (p.8) capacity for human affection. Thus when he is confronted with the sight of his mortally wounded nephew:

> The face and manner of the young man (he had numbered only twenty years) expressed a deep sorrow; manly in its stern tranquillity; sincere in its perfect

> innocence of display. As he looked on the child, his blue eyes – bright, piercing, and lively – softened like a woman's; his lips, hardly hidden by his short beard, closed and quivered and his chest heaved under the armour that lay upon its noble proportions. (p.8)

Hermanric demonstrates the kind of overt emotional concern for the child that Romantic and Evangelical depictions of family life had designated as belonging to the mother and to the feminine sphere.[198] Yet in his combination of womanly physical manifestations of grief and 'manly' endeavour to control the expression of these emotions, Hermanric bears a striking resemblance to descriptions of the mid-century paternal archetype that John Tosh has called the 'intimate father.' This figure is characterized by a 'tenderness and familiarity' towards children, but one which is 'balanced by a respect for discipline and routine'.[199] Collins enlists the cultural power of the intimate father figure to ensure that Hermanric's masculine virtue is enhanced, in the eyes of his readers, precisely because it is balanced, moderate and compatible with contemporary ideologies of domesticity and race.

That we are meant to understand the relationship between Hermanric and Antonina in terms of explicitly sexual – and therefore racial – union, is evident from Collins's couching of Hermanric's death scene in the imagery of lost virginity. When the Huns burst into the farmhouse and stab Hermanric in sight of Antonina, she is overcome by the violence of the act and 'falls insensible by the side of her young warrior – her dress was spattered with his blood' (p.241). The metaphorical deflowering of Antonina is sanctioned upon her return to Rome by her father, who acknowledges Hermanric as 'a son that has been taken from me' (p.267), thereby legitimizing in the minds of the reader any heirs which might have been born to them. It is not overreaching, then, to suggest that the idyllic house in the suburbs where Hermanric installs Antonina is used to encourage a positive reading of the couple's

[198] Such characteristics are also typical of nineteenth-century constructions of muscular Christian manliness, such as Tom Brown's development from rough boyhood into a more thoughtful and manly youth after he is entrusted with the care of Arthur, 'in the hope that when [Tom] had somebody to lean on [him, he] would begin to stand a little steadier […] and get manliness and thoughtfulness.' (Hughes, p.365).
[199] Tosh, *A Man's Place,* pp.79-101 (p.99).

union, and to facilitate a founding narrative of the British male, his Romano-Germanic heritage, and his cultural and racial credentials for imperial rule.

In contrast to the barrenness of the Alps or the flimsy softness of the palace at Ravenna, the isolated farmhouse is a place of colour, growth, and rebirth:

> Far from being melancholy, there was something soothing and attractive about the loneliness of the deserted farm [...] As Antonina beheld the brightened fields and the shadowed woods, here mingled, there succeeding each other [...] that eloquent voice of nature, whose audience is the human heart, and whose theme is eternal love, spoke inspiringly to her attentive senses. (p.191)

Read spatially, Antonina's pleasant experience of 'loneliness' in the farmhouse functions as an endorsement of mid-Victorian domestic ideals, which allocated to women the domestic sphere as a place of safety, comfort and happiness. Furthermore, Collins utilizes biblical tropes and references to another idyllic garden peopled by mythological parent figures to add a religious endorsement to the desirability of the couple's union. 'Have you never thought', Antonina asks Hermanric as they survey the landscape; 'that light and air, and the perfume of flowers, might contain some relics of the beauties of Eden?' (p.191). Readers of *Antonina* in 1850 are invited to recognize and celebrate their own national values and gender ideals in what is ultimately a fictionalized origin myth of the British imperial race.[200]

The racial hybridity in *Antonina* echoes that described by Matthew Arnold in *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867). Arnold praises the racial and cultural influences of 'the Celtic peoples who are blended with us,' whilst also claiming a classical inheritance for the

[200] *Antonina* received overwhelmingly positive reviews in 1850, most notably from the *Examiner*, 2199 (March 1850), p.181, which praised the novel's message that: 'What are called periods of decline are simply those when new development has become inevitable' (p.181); and from the *Gentleman's Magazine*, (April, 1850), pp.408-409, which lauded the reinvigoration of 'a people who had once excited astonishment by their masculine character, degenerated into the last stage of effeminacy [by] new people and young nations rising up around in the first rough, unfashioned grandeur of that strength which was soon to change the face of Europe' (p.408).

British race, who 'inherited the great Greek and Roman oratorical tradition more than the orators of any other country.'[201] It is a narrative also found at the heart of contemporary works from a variety of disciplines about ancient Rome, from John Collingwood's archaeological work *The Roman Wall* (1851) and J.G. Sheppard's *The Fall of Rome and the Rise of New Nationalities* (1861), to Charles Kingsley's lectures on race in *The Roman and the Teuton* (1864). It was also a narrative which proved useful for British national identity in that it allowed for a clear distinction between British imperial masculinities and the more exclusively Romanesque identities of Napoleonic France. After all, as Richard Hingley reminds us, '"Imperialism" first entered the English language in the 1840s, when it was introduced as a term to describe the France of Napoleon III'.[202] A reader of *Antonina* in 1850, then, is invited to recognize himself as the heir of Hermanric and Antonina, and the Romano-Germanic racial hybridity their union represents.

In terms of national and masculine identity, however, the Victorian reader is in a much more comfortable position than the character of Hermanric in AD408. For Hermanric, caught as he is between the past and the future, between Goisvintha and Antonina and the very different sets of national values and gender ideals they represent, the struggle to break with his cultural roots and to adapt in pursuit of a more civilized masculinity is a difficult and ideologically dangerous one, since it requires him to gamble with his own sense of masculine identity and subjectivity. By loving Antonina, Hermanric risks his standing in elite male society. This is because, although 'reverence of woman' (p.122) and, as we have seen, genuine feelings of grief over the death of his nephew – the 'future warrior' (p.120) of the Gothic race – are not incompatible with Gothic ideals of manliness, romantic

[201] Matthew Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1867), p.viii; 118.
[202] Hingley, *Roman Officers and English Gentlemen*, p.20. On representations of France as a more exclusively Latin nation, see Arnold, *Celtic Literature*: 'Gaul, without changing the character of her blood, became, for all intents and purposes, a Latin country [...] Latinism conquered Celtism in her, as it also conquered the Germanism imported by the Frankish and other invasions [...] The governing character of France, as a power in the world, is Latin; such was the force of Greek and Roman civilization' (p.113).

sentiment and affection are ‘numbered with the base inferior passions’ (p.122) by Collins’s Goths. It is precisely this cultural opposition to romantic love which leads his sister Goisvintha to bring the full weight of the siblings’ shared cultural heritage to bear on her brother’s conscience, in an attempt to win him back to what she considers more ‘correct’ standards of masculinity. She seeks Hermanric out at the farmhouse he shares with Antonina and sings to him the songs of ancient gods and their loathing of physical and emotional weakness (p.237), preaching the ancient wisdom of ‘a race of women who slew their wounded husbands, brothers, and sons, with their own hands, when they sought them after battle, dishonoured by defeat’ (p.225). Her words hold a terrible appeal for the warrior, who finds himself tormented ‘with visions of the impatient army, spurred at length into ferocious action [...] and forcing him back for ever into their avenging ranks’ (p.231). It is a nightmarish image of individual masculinity overwhelmed by the collective identity of the nation. It also implies the regression or degeneration of civilization, with Hermanric being dragged backwards through time and absorbed into what we are invited to interpret as a less civilized past. Though the thought is terrifying to him, the warrior is not quite able to disentangle himself from his brutal Gothic inheritance and follow Antonina into a more civilized future. Her civilizing influence over him, we are told, has ‘not yet acquired power enough to smother in him completely the warlike instincts of his sex and nation’ (p.183). Hermanric’s indecision is as much a cultural and historical paralysis as it is a personal one, trapped as he is between two opposing sets of gender traits and suspended in history between the ancient world, with its excesses of brutality and decadence, and a modern Europe peopled by a superior hybrid race which only his own union with Antonina can produce.

Hermanric’s refusal to comply with the stringent masculine codes of his own people eventually becomes intolerable to Goisvintha, who punishes her brother not with death, but with symbolic emasculation. By mutilating his sword hand, Goisvintha deprives her brother

of all sense of masculine identity and social standing among the Goths and also, symbolically, of his ability to produce heirs with Antonina. 'Your life as a warrior is at an end!' (p.235) she cries and certainly Hermanric seems to lose all sense of subjectivity and selfhood with this severing of the cultural and ideological bonds which have thus far held his identity in place: 'His very consciousness of his existence, though he moved and breathed, seemed to have ceased' (p.235). Goisvintha has no need to exterminate her brother's subjectivity and standing further by killing him, and Hermanric's actual death comes soon after at the hands of an entirely non-European race – the Huns.

Yet the fact that Hermanric is murdered before any physical consummation of his union with Antonina does not close down the novel's promise of perfect hybrid masculinity. Rather, Collins uses the death of Hermanric and the tragic separation of the lovers to mythologize a notion of an imperial destiny for Britain and the British male. The heirs that Antonina and Hermanric would have produced in a single generation might not have come to fruition in the novel itself, it is suggested, but the migration, intermarriage and gradual assimilation of their respective cultures over the course of fifteen hundred years, have eventually produced the same qualities in the British race. Thus does Collins describe Hermanric's first meeting with Antonina as amounting to 'A new page in the history of humanity' (p.132). The nineteenth-century reader becomes, with the act of reading *Antonina*, the fulfilment of the novel's promise of a race of men who, by virtue of their Romano-Germanic heritage, are racially capable and culturally entitled to rule an empire even greater than that of ancient Rome.

Indeed, by the 1850s, the Roman parallel can be seen to have regained some cultural currency as a vocabulary for conceptualizing and speaking about imperial relationships. At the level of policy-making, the Roman parallel began to eclipse the Greek, maritime model, affording relevant frameworks for administrating the variety of races and cultures which were being brought under British rule, as well as narratives by which the authority of the

British imperialist could be conceived of as a paternal, educational duty. Beyond the specific context of the liberal imperialist policy of Anglicization, however, mid-nineteenth-century receptions of Rome are tentative at best. Taken in isolation, the Roman parallel encompassed too many problematic associations – from slavery and the persecution of Christians, to decadence and decline – to be easily compatible with mid-century notions of the paternalism and civilizing mission of empire. Yet in combination with Britain's Teutonic heritage, the Roman parallel proved to be an invaluable past through which to celebrate the racial and cultural credentials of the liberal imperialist as an imperial father-figure. Such hybrid notions of imperial manliness allowed writers like Collins, Macaulay and Kingsley to selectively employ the most useful parts of Roman and Teutonic pasts and combine these disparate elements into a new imperial image: a vision of the British Empire which synthesized Roman military and administrative might with Teutonic racial and moral fortitude.

This picture of British imperial manliness as an ideal mix of the Roman and the Teuton, however, was dependent upon good relations with both the subject peoples of empire and with the modern German states. Both of these relationships came under increasing strain from the late 1850s, with the Indian Mutiny of 1857 and the growth of Prussian aggression in Europe. The result was a destabilization of those notions of paternalism which had underpinned liberal imperial masculinities and of the Romano-Teutonic parallels used to articulate such ideologies.

The Indian Mutiny broke out in May 1857 and, despite the comparatively small scale of the conflict itself, scholars have been fairly unanimous in pinpointing the uprising – and the associated trauma for British national identity – as a catalyst for a distinctive shift in imperial attitudes. Moreover, the mutiny marked a significant turning point for constructions of imperial manliness. As Christopher Herbert notes: 'The shock of finding that they were despised by their supposedly grateful imperial subjects was in part the shock

of finding that their national idealism and national self-esteem were self-deluding and morally corrupting.'[203] The mutiny ultimately served to proclaim the liberal imperialist project of Macaulay and Trevelyan, and its associated model of the imperial male as a father/educator/civilizer-figure, a failure. The peoples of empire, it seemed to many, might be beyond civilizing and must therefore be dominated by a superior type of masculinity characterized by superior physical strength.[204] Scholarly opinion differs on the extent to which this narrative develops out of British hysteria and racial hatred in the wake of national trauma, and how far, as Herbert has argued, this kind of jingoism and aggression are largely postcolonial scripts, born of a tendency to equate imperialism with racism in postcolonial criticism.[205] Herbert views the decline of liberal imperial ideologies after 1857 as part of a larger British need to examine the national conscience, and highlights the presence of an alternative discourse which presented the mutiny as an expression of 'widespread Indian resentment, not at all limited to the Army of Bengal, at the whole conduct of British rule.'[206] In neither case, however, do responses to the mutiny trigger an outright rejection of the Roman parallel in the discourses of empire. Where once the Roman model had been an uneasy fit for imperial attitudes and required tempering with Britain's Teutonic pasts, responses to the Indian Mutiny push the Roman parallel towards the centre of a new imperialist discourse precisely because of Rome's more aggressive, militaristic associations. As Sarah Butler notes:

> The Indian Mutiny […] was not only to challenge the civilizing mission but also to cause Roman rather than Greek methods of colonization to be regarded more favourably […] The mutiny added a new and urgent imperative to the colonization of overseas territories as a greater number of Britons in the colonies increased the potential for the control of 'troublesome' natives. Coinciding with this new imperative, it became evident that the

[203] Christopher Herbert, *War of No Pity: The Indian Mutiny and Victorian Trauma* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), pp.16-17. On the failure of the Liberal Imperial project, see also Mantena, p.70.
[204] See Herbert, *War of No Pity*, pp.6-7; 9.
[205] See Herbert, *War of No Pity*, pp.6-7.
[206] Herbert, *War of No Pity*, p.9.

> Roman system of colonization rather than the Greek more closely approximated Britain's needs.[207]

Where once the Roman parallel had served to sugar the pill of conquest and acculturation for Britain's imperial subjects, and to articulate relationships based on the notion of inherent sameness between master/teacher and subject/pupil, it now came to signify a more aggressive type of masculine authority and imperial relationships based on the notion of fundamental difference. Thus the use of the Roman parallel was particularly pronounced among writers like Charles Ball, who called for retaliation and revenge in the wake of the mutiny:

> It has long been a subject of complaint that our government is formidable only to the petty villain; it awards punishment for thefts, whilst murderers, so that the murderers be numerous, go unpunished. We require a little of the old Roman spirit, which disdained to treat with a victorious enemy, and at the time of its greatest inferiority threatened punishment. Neither trouble nor treasure are of any moment when compared with the extermination of those men who have dared to break their allegiance, and have consummated their treachery with the pangs of helpless women and children.[208]

Ball's outrage at the mutiny is a masculine outrage as much as a national one. The dual focus of his indignance is the criminality and 'treachery' of Britain's imperial subjects, but also, as we find in so many nineteenth-century 'mutiny novels', the violence committed against 'helpless women and children'.[209] The mutiny amounts not only to an affront to the security of the empire, but also to masculine honour, since insurgency in the empire has resulted in the British male being unable to protect his dependents. The rhetoric of extermination, then, becomes a way of reasserting masculine virtue in the wake of the uprising. Furthermore, it is used to articulate a style of masculinity that is no longer figured

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[207] Butler, pp.25-26.
[208] Charles Ball, *The History of the Indian Mutiny; Giving a Detailed Account of the Sepoy Insurrection in India* (London: The London Publishing Company, 1858), p.142.
[209] For more on mutiny fiction and the outrage of British writers regarding the violence against women and children during the uprising, see: Penelope Tuson, 'Mutiny Narratives and the Imperial Feminine: European Women's Accounts of the Rebellion in India in 1857', *Women's Studies International Forum,* 21 (1998), pp.291-303; Herbert, pp.147-152.

as a benign, nurturing, paternal influence, but rather as a stern, disciplinarian authority. Most significantly, it is an expression of post-mutiny masculinity which is directly equated with being more 'Roman'. In his call for decisive retaliation by the British government, Ball is not drawing on the Roman past in its alloyed or hybrid form, but invoking more explicitly an imperial Roman past complete with those associations of militarism and physical strength which had been problematic for pre-mutiny liberal manliness. In his call for the British government to summon 'a little of the Roman spirit' to enact swift annihilation of rebellious forces, it is even possible that Ball is invoking in an indirect way, some of the more brutal episodes from the history of the Roman empire, such as the annihilation of the rebels after the Spartacus revolt of 71BC. The mutiny of 1857 triggered a more direct engagement with an unalloyed Roman past which would have been too problematic in its militarism and authoritarianism to frame imperial relationships prior to the trauma of the uprisings.

A further factor contributing to the adoption of a more singularly Roman model was the growth of Prussian aggression in the 1850s and 60s. After several decades of chafing under Austrian dominance of the German *bund,* Prussia adopted an increasingly aggressive stance – both in policy and rhetoric – when weaknesses began to appear in Austria's political stability from 1848. Prussia sought to exclude Austria from a new German confederation for which Prussia would serve as a locus of unification. Furthermore, Prussia was becoming a determinedly industrialized power, producing 80% of the confederation's coal and iron by 1860.[210] It was, on the one hand, a useful trade ally for Britain and her empire whilst, on the other, a potential rival in terms of economic and military strength. The latter of these relationships was compounded with the rise of the Prussian Prime Minister Otto von Bismarck, whose policies of expansion and aggression not merely in the

[210] Geoffrey Warwo, *The Austro-Prussian War: Austria's War with Prussia and Italy in 1866* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.39.

east and the empire, but also in western Europe, were unsettling for his European neighbours. Bismarck's assertions that 'the first duty of Prussia was to expand', and that expansion would come from 'blood and iron' and from 'great crises', which were 'the weather most conducive to Prussia's growth',[211] precipitated the need to distinguish Britain's Teutonic heritage from this more problematic model of Germanic identity. Prussia's involvement in the Schleswig Wars (1848-51, 1864), the Austro-Prussian War (1866) and the Franco-German War (1870-71) complicated Britain's access to and use of the Teutonic past in the construction of national identity and imperial masculinity. Prussian aggression in the decades leading up to German unification therefore had the result of cementing even further a more uniquely Roman framework for constructing imperial masculinities in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the age of New Imperialism.

3.3 The New Imperialist, 1876 – 1914

The last quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed a shift in the nature of the British imperial project, with the official administration of India transferring from the East India Company to the Crown from 1858, and the 'Scramble for Africa' gaining momentum from the 1880s. The result for constructions of masculine identity was a widespread glorification of the kind of robust, acquisitive style of manliness which we saw celebrated in Charles Grey Robertson's article 'A Note on the New Imperialism'. It was a new masculine ideal which is traceable in a variety of materials from official political records to popular entertainments and literary texts. I want to suggest in the final section of this chapter that, in both official and literary writing about empire from 1876, ancient Rome became a primary framework for conceptualizing and articulating New Imperialist ideologies and their associated styles of masculinity.

[211] Cited in Warwo, p.40.

The increasingly overt and official sanctioning of the Roman parallel as a framework for talking about empire is perhaps nowhere more pronounced than in the parliamentary debates of 1876 concerning the Royal Titles Bill and the official title that Queen Victoria should hold in India. The historical associations of the title conferred upon Victoria were of particular significance for the stability of the empire since, as former Home Secretary and Chancellor to the Exchequer, Robert Lowe, reminded the house on 17th February: '"Young India" now reads classics and history.'[212] This is almost certainly a reference to the Anglicization project of the 1830s-1850s and the education of the 'learned natives of India'[213] as prescribed by Macaulay. But Lowe's words also hint at deeper anxieties about the stability and authority of western masculine power structures in the empire. By teaching India classical history, as well as English, Latin and Greek, the administrators of empire had afforded their unruly imperial subjects a glimpse into the workings of those power structures through which western hegemonies, and in particular elite male hegemonies, were upheld. Choosing the right historical parallel to articulate the nature of British imperial authority was therefore imperative in 1876. It was not, however, an entirely foregone conclusion in favour of Rome. For Mr Lowe the ancient Roman model had little to offer in terms of capturing the authority of the monarch or the manly characteristics of the men who vouchsafed her rule. 'Which would furnish the better associations in [Indian] minds?' he asked his fellow MPs:

> Whether the memories and deeds of the noble line of Kings that have reigned in England from the time of Egbert, who have associated their names with the glories of her history, and with the triumphs of her civilization; or of the wretches who have filled the throne of Imperial Rome, who have been often raised to their position by military violence, and who sank below ordinary human nature in debauchery and crime? If we have two sets of associations, why choose the worse?[214]

[212] HC Debate, 17 February 1876, vol.227, cc.407-28 (c.414).
[213] Macaulay, *Indian Education*, p.719.
[214] HC Debate, 17 February 1876, vol.227, cc.407-28 (c.414).

For Lowe, Britain's Anglo Saxon heritage was both separable from and preferable to her Roman past, offering a more stable model of non-decadent manliness and non-violent imperial governance. He was supported in this view by Joseph Cowen at the third reading of the Bill, when Cowen expressed his fear that Britain 'had dominions in every quarter of the globe, and she was following the Roman expedient of taking a pretentious title for its ruler.' Cowen also played upon the power of the Gibbonian narrative of decline when he expressed his 'hope [...] that this change did not indicate the commencement of the downward career of the power of Britain, as like circumstances and changes marked the fall of Rome. The title of King was of purely Saxon origin,'[215] and therefore preferable to those for whom Rome was synonymous with degeneration and decadence.

However, for Sir George Bowyer, who spoke against Mr Lowe on the issue of the Royal Titles Bill, Rome had an entirely different and more useful set of associations. Bowyer pointed out to the House that the title of Empress, according to the Roman tradition, captured much more accurately the political might of Victoria's position, without provoking resentment from the leaders of subject peoples. 'History', he said, 'showed that the title of Emperor was derived from the Roman Empire – from Caesar; and the idea of a Roman Emperor was that of a King over other Kings, a potentate who had for subjects tributary Kings [...] In India the Queen was undoubtedly the Sovereign over Sovereign Princes.'[216] His arguments in favour of officially adopting the Roman title proved to be the more compelling: Victoria was granted the title of Empress of India on the 1st May 1876 in a move which represents the official sanctioning of the Roman parallel as a vocabulary for talking about empire.

In keeping with the official sanctioning of the Roman parallel by the crown, new imperialist writing begins to draw more overt parallels between the Roman and British

[215] HC Debate, 23 March 1876, vol.228, cc.480-518 (c. 508).
[216] HC Debate, 17 February 1876, vol.227, cc.407-28 (c.419).

empires, and to articulate the nature and values of British imperialism with more explicit reference to Roman models. This is particularly true of the rhetoric used by those commentators and administrators who were most directly involved in the running of the empire, and whose writing makes overt use of Roman parallels, often to the explicit rejection of Greek or Teutonic pasts. In *Ancient and Modern Imperialism* (1910), which he published after retiring from his twenty-four-year term as Consul-General of Egypt, Evelyn Baring, Lord Cromer examines the practical and ideological challenges of imperial governance by means of an extended comparison of the ancient Roman and British empires. The origins of Victorian imperialism are located by Cromer firmly in the Roman past, whilst Greece is rejected entirely as a useful model for imperial governance and gender ideals:

> The concept of Imperialism, as we understand, and as the Romans, though with many notable differences, understood the term, was wholly foreign to the Greek mind [...] The undisciplined and idealistic Greek, with his sense of individuality, was far less suitable to carry an Imperial policy into execution than the austere and practical Roman, who not only made the law, but obeyed it, and who was surrounded from his cradle to his grave with associations calculated to foster Imperial tendencies.[217]

The main point of similarity between the ancient Roman Empire and Cromer's understanding of British imperialist values is the regimented, organized and even disciplinarian way in which the empire is administrated in order to ensure maximum efficiency and the success of the imperial project. It is a vision of imperialism underwritten by notions of collectivism, especially with regards to the identity and values of the thousands of men who served the empire. Cromer contrasts this notion of collective masculine discipline with what he considers to be the less useful and more emphatically Greek ideals of individualism. Likewise, in *The Ancient Roman Empire and the British Empire in India* (1914), James Bryce expresses a similar dissatisfaction with the Germanic

[217] Evelyn Baring, Lord Cromer, *Ancient and Modern Imperialism* (London: John Murray, 1910), pp.9;14.

parallel that had been so central to Liberal Imperial constructions of manliness prior to 1857. 'Teutonic migrations' and 'Arabic conquests', he writes, had dealt 'terrible strokes' to the 'intellectual as well as the [...] political authority'[218] of the race of men who would become the Victorian imperialists of his own day. Instead, Bryce praises the British Empire not as a mercantile institution, but a military enterprise sustained by the discipline and physical robustness of its male representatives:

> The English in India are primarily soldiers. True it is that they went to India three centuries ago as traders, that it was out of a trading company that their power arose and that this trading company did not disappear until 1858. The covenanted civil service, to which Clive for instance belonged, began as a body of commercial clerks. Nothing sounds more pacific. But the men of the sword very soon began to eclipse the men of the quill and the account book [...] It is a military society, military first and foremost [...] military questions occupy everyone's thoughts and talk.[219]

Both Cromer and Bryce acknowledge the commercial origins of the British Empire under the East India Company – the same commerciality which had underpinned the use of the Greek model for constructions of mercantile masculinities in the late 18th century. Yet both writers imply that the British Empire, by the high imperial period, had progressed beyond the Greek model and the 'timid', 'passive', maritime manliness that had so infuriated Robertson in 1891, towards a more exclusively Roman set of imperial values and 'style' of masculinity.

According to such models, even the physical spaces of the 'great empire' come to resemble those of the ancient Roman world. Thus Bryce describes the organization of imperial settlements in 1914:

> Many of the railways are primarily strategic lines, as were the Roman roads. The railway stations are often placed, for military reasons, at a distance from

[218] James Bryce, *The Ancient Roman Empire and the British Empire in India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1914), pp.13-14.
[219] Bryce, pp.13-14.

> the towns they serve: and the cantonments where the Europeans, civilians as well as soldiers, reside, usually built some way off from the native cities, have themselves, as happened in the Roman Empire, grown into regular towns.[220]

Imperialist values are here inscribed into the very landscape of an empire. It is a landscape which has, as a result of masculine endeavour and a militaristic, expansionist agenda, been transformed in both a physical and literary sense, into a new Rome. In much the same way as the Roman parallel allowed Jane Eyre to recognize and verbalize the hierarchies of dominance and control that existed between herself and her cousin John Reed, so too does the Roman Empire allow late-Victorian imperialists to conceptualize and speak about the greatness of their own imperial achievement and the values and ideologies that it represents.

As part of this formulation of New Imperialist ideology, there emerges an insistent locating of the health and physical strength of the empire in the body of its male representative.[221] The success of the imperial project is increasingly framed as a matter of physical vigour rather than a question of intellectual, religious or moral fortitude after the Evangelical model. Charles Robertson flagged up this totemic disinterest in dictating moral behaviour as a defining feature of imperial masculinity when he wrote that the New Imperialist 'is not violently interested in sexual matters nor in the liquor traffic. For these be personal matters within the individual jurisdiction. Questions, indeed, which every healthy citizen, who is of age, must and does settle for himself [...] He looks on the interminable discussion of other people's private affairs in public as mere magnified gossip' (*NI*, p.231). It is a sentiment that bolsters John Tosh's assessment that 'For any man who fretted against "Victorian" conventions of domesticity and sexual continence, the colonies offered the promise of release, and the chance to explore alternatives ranging from

[220] Bryce, p.14.
[221] See Patrick F. McDevitt, *May the Best Man Win: Sport, Masculinity and Nationalism in Great Britain and the Empire, 1880-1935* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2004) on the emphasis on sport and physical fitness in imperial discourse. See also Laura Franey, *Victorian Travel Writing and Imperial Violence* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2003).

concubinage to pederasty.'[222] As Miles Taylor has noted, however, there was a discernable anti-imperial counter-rhetoric in this period, spearheaded by writers like Wilfrid Scanwen Blunt, for whom such disavowals of moral responsibility and domestic life by Britons in the empire amounted to a troubling 'distorted' kind of manliness. It is an accusation which appears in anti-imperial writing as a charge of 'Caesarist' brutality at the heart of imperial policy and masculinity.[223] Yet regardless of whether such works as Robertson's amounted, as anti-imperialist writers claimed, to a propagandist and jingoistic use of the past, it is pro-imperial and New Imperialist writing which constitute the most culturally dominant receptions of ancient Rome in this period. It is to Rome that pro-imperial writers looked for desirable models of masculine behaviour in an imperial context, and for a means of imagining the historical significance of the British Empire for future generations. The anonymous future fiction *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire* (1905), for instance, is narrated by an imagined Japanese historian in the year 2005, and deploys ancient Roman comparisons to celebrate the 'Man of the Sword' over the 'Man of the Pen' as an imperialist ideal:

> Cicero was a great *talker*. He talked of old age and virtue; he talked of Pompey, who was the Kitchener of the Italian 'man in the street'; but above all things he talked about the Roman Empire. Shortly after Cicero talked about it the Roman Empire began to decline. Empires do not ask for orators. They ask for men of action, who are prepared to do their duty.[224]

In a marked departure from the positive readings of Cicero as paragon of the non-violent political masculinities discussed in chapter two, *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire* presents a direct correlation between the verbosity of Cicero and the deterioration of empire.

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[222] Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, p.200.

[223] See Miles Taylor, 'Imperium et Libertas? Rethinking the Radical Critique of Imperialism During the Nineteenth Century,' *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 19:1 (1991), pp.1-23 (p.2). For more on anti-imperialist movements in Britain, India and Egypt see Mira Mattikala, *Empire and Imperial Ambition: Englishness and Anti-Imperialism in Late-Victorian Britain* (London: Tauris, 2011).

[224] [Anon.] *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire: A Brief Account of Those Causes Which Resulted in the Destruction of Our Late Ally, Together With a Comparison Between the British and Roman Empires: Appointed For Use in the National Schools of Japan, Tokio, 2005* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1905), p.5.

Instead it is Pompey the Great, the three-time consul of Rome, who commanded armies from the age of seventeen and was thrice awarded the triumph – Rome's highest public honour for military service to the empire – who is used to glorify Lord Kitchener in the passage. We find here, as in Bryce, 'heroes' like Clive and Kitchener being rewritten into the history of the empire on account of their energetic leadership and martial prowess, and in terms which would have been utterly at odds with Greek-style ideals of maritime commercialism underpinned by religio-moral principles.

In short, New Imperialist manliness was characterized by a desire for action and the acquisition of territory. It was a collective identity which depended to a large extent on a man's rejection of domestic duties and constraints, as well as on a refusal to comment on the moral and sexual behaviour of his peers (although they would continue to be judgemental about the moral practices of colonial peoples).[225] It might seem ironic, then, that the territorial desire which sits at the heart of New Imperialist constructions of manliness should come to be inscribed metaphorically as *sexual* desire in so many of the best-known literary texts about empire. In H. Rider Haggard's *She* (1887), for instance, the immortal queen Ayesha embodies precisely this dual sexual/territorial temptation for Horace Holly and Leo Vincey, who penetrate the deepest regions of Africa in search of the lost city which she inhabits.[226] Having been cursed with eternal life, Ayesha is unspeakably and eternally beautiful. Her erotic appeal is emphasised through a series of unveilings which Bradley Deane has helpfully interpreted as acts of 'imperial striptease'.[227] Yet

[225] See Bradley Deane, *Masculinity and the New Imperialism*: *Rewriting Manhood in British Popular Literature, 1870-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) for a detailed survey of New Imperialist constructions of ideal manliness.

[226] Another, and perhaps the best-known example of this metaphor is the figuring of the landscape in *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) whereby the mountains become 'Sheba's breasts'. See Rebecca Stott, 'The Dark Continent: Africa as Female Body in Haggard's Adventure Fiction', *Feminist Review*, 32 (1989), pp.69-89.

[227] Bradley Deane, in 'Mummy Fiction and the Occupation of Egypt: Imperial Striptease', *ELT*, 51 (2008), pp.381-410 suggests that 'The long critical tradition that regards Ayesha as a monstrous threat to British ideals – a *femme fatale* inspired by the New Woman's subversive challenges or a spectre of reverse colonization – gravely underestimates the degree to which the novel positions her as the perfect imperial bride' (p.396) and attributes the success of Haggard's novel to its creating 'an energizing myth of empire' (p.409).

Ayesha's erotic appeal is paralleled in the territorial fantasy that she embodies when she offers the men a vision of absolute and universal imperial conquest. Holly remarks that: 'I had little doubt, [that she would] assume absolute rule over the British dominions, and probably over the whole earth, and, though I was sure that she would speedily make ours the most glorious and prosperous empire that the world has ever seen, it would be at the cost of a terrible sacrifice of life.'[228] It is a terrifying but tempting vision of imperial acquisition linked with the sexual possession of Ayesha herself, who promises universal empire as a form of dowry to Leo Vincey. Sexual appetites in New Imperialist fiction come to represent the 'territorial appetite' which, according to William Gladstone, speaking on the issue of British intervention in Egypt, 'has within the last quarter of a century revived among us with an abnormal vigour.'[229] Indeed, whilst the majority of scholarly criticism on imperial masculinity and on receptions of Rome in British imperial culture has tended to focus on British writing about India, it is in the late-Victorian craze for fictions about Egypt – and Egypt's most famous queen, Cleopatra – that we can witness the full extent to which Rome had become a primary framework for conceptualizing and codifying imperial manliness.

In his article 'Our Cleopatra' (1894), H.D. Traill outlines 'the extraordinary and secular attraction of Egypt' for the British imperialist:

> What the conquering soldier finds irresistible in it one can see at a glance. Nay, it stares at you from the map, this vantage-point of observation and command in the extreme south-eastern corner of the sea which for long ages of human history washed the shores and bore the vessels of the only civilized world. [230]

[228] Henry Rider Haggard, *She* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p.226.
[229] William Ewart Gladstone, 'Aggression on Egypt and Freedom in the East: Article Contributed by the Right Hon. W.E. Gladstone M.P., to the Nineteenth Century, in 1877', in *Empire and Imperialism: the Debate of the 1870s*, ed. by Peter Cain (South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine Press, 1999), pp.188-209 (p.188).
[230] H. D. Traill, 'Our Cleopatra', *The National Review*, 23 (March 1894), pp.118-127 (pp.118-119). Hereafter cited parenthetically.

In literal terms, the appeal of Egypt for the British Empire was strategic, but it is figured throughout the article as an eroticised desire for Egypt's most famous queen, with all her 'physical allurements' including 'beauty', 'fertility', and a 'loveliness of aspect' (p.118). Here then, as Bradley Deane has noted, 'political and sexual possibilities salaciously converge' and 'the riddle of imperial policy towards Egypt is allegorized for the public as a problem of sexuality.'[231] So too in Rider Haggard's novel *Cleopatra* (1889), which I will consider in more detail later in this chapter, the narrator's first glimpse of the queen, in all her oriental pageantry and splendour, is described as a moment of sexual and imperial possibility. Recounting the moment at which the crowds of Alexandria part in a kind of unveiling of Cleopatra, Harmachis exclaims: 'There before me was the grandeur of her Imperial shape'.[232] Later, when the queen promises herself to Antony, it is a promise of empire as well as of sexual union:

> There, now I am your vassal Queen, and through me all old Egypt that I rule does homage to Antony the Triumvir, who shall be Antony the Emperor of Rome and Khem's Imperial Lord! (p.209)

What Britain chose to do with Egypt in terms of foreign policy, and with Cleopatra in the domain of literature and culture, therefore becomes a mutually reinforcing process, mirroring back the perceived styles and standards of British imperial manliness. This accounts for why the cultural fascination with Cleopatra in the final decades of the century correlates so directly with British intervention in Egypt, as questions of imperial authority and masculine identity become conflated as part of this metaphorical encounter between Cleopatra and the Roman west.

In 1882 British forces under General Garnet Wolseley had occupied Egypt, establishing a protectorate and essentially absorbing the country into the British Empire.

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[231] Deane, p.384.
[232] Henry Rider Haggard, *Cleopatra* (New York: Collier and Son, 1888), p.84. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

Soon after *Punch* magazine published a cartoon entitled 'Cleopatra Before Caesar: or, The Egyptian Difficulty' (Fig. 4), which ponders the question of what Britain should do with Egypt in terms that are both emphatically Roman and explicitly gendered. Though the sketch is a pastiche of Jean Léon Gérôme's painting 'Caesar and Cleopatra' (1866), its original subject derives from one of the more titillating episodes in the history of the Roman Empire, in which Cleopatra has herself smuggled into Caesar's presence after he has established unofficial control over Alexandria.[233] The prevailing narrative of this period in the western tradition insists that, as a result of this meeting, Caesar placed Cleopatra on the throne of Egypt as a puppet queen, ensuring the continued prosperity of Rome's empire by guaranteeing Roman access to Egyptian grain, trade routes and tribute, as well as setting a precedent for western imperial rule in the country. Cleopatra also bore Caesar's only male child, Caesarion. After the assassination of the dictator in 44BC, she sided with Mark Antony in his subsequent struggle with Augustus (then Octavian) for control over the Roman Empire. It was a struggle which ended with the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra at Actium, their respective suicides, and the Augustan propaganda machine's refiguring of what was essentially a civil conflict between Roman generals into a tale of western imperial triumph over depraved oriental femininity. For British imperial ideologies which found expression through recourse to the Roman parallel, Cleopatra presented a unique conundrum and a unique opportunity. Her story, intertwined as it is with those of Rome's most famous generals, was vital to narratives of western masculine dominance over the East. Yet she, like her literary cousins the 'eternal feminine' of Haggard's Ayesha novels or the 'living mummy' of fin-de-siècle mummy fiction, also functioned as a locus of anxiety about challenges to British masculinity from the orient, the occult, or the New Woman.

[233] See Plutarch, 'Caesar', pp.290-291.

Fig. 4. ‘Cleopatra Before Caesar; or, The Egyptian Difficulty’, *Punch,* 83 (December 1882), p.163.

In her multiple guises as an ally of western imperial ambition, object of erotic desire, and embodiment of oriental resistance to colonial power, Cleopatra was used to evoke what I suggest are interconnected, rather than competing, impulses of desire, triumph and terror for New Imperialist manliness.

If we read Cleopatra as embodying a genuine challenge to British imperial identity, then these impulses form the essence of the 'Egyptian Difficulty' that Gladstone ponders in the *Punch* cartoon as he gazes at the word EGYPT emblazoned on Cleopatra's chest, directly below her bare breasts. It is a political gaze but also an explicitly gendered and sexualized one, and any decision resulting from it will have repercussions for western, male hegemonies both at home and in the empire. Gladstone's embracing Cleopatra and the oriental knowledge she represents – as Antony did in 31BC – would destabilize the binary of eastern otherness and British civilization which served as a justification for continued British control in the Empire. Yet to reject the erotic appeal of Egypt's queen would be equally dangerous since it would imply a lack of masculine imperial desire on Britain's part for the revenues, improved access to India, and prestige – especially over the French and Ottoman empires – which were the entailments of possessing Egypt as part of the empire. It is a conundrum of classical reception in an imperial age which goes some way towards explaining Wolseley's role in the cartoon. Wolseley, with his arm outstretched in the centre of the composition, could be making an introductory gesture or a questioning one, but either way his anxious gaze is fixed not upon Cleopatra in all her eroticised splendour, but upon Gladstone, who will decide how this oriental other is to be treated. Wolseley appears less troubled by Cleopatra's existence than he is apprehensive about the consequences of her presence for imperial masculinity.

However, the unique position occupied by Cleopatra in the western literary tradition means that, regardless of how far the queen might appear to challenge the power structures of the British Empire, she is ultimately more useful to imperialist ideologies than she can

ever be threatening to them. From the moment of her death in 30BC, Cleopatra's story became the property of a western, masculine literary tradition, inscribed most notably – and in the absence of any self-written account by the queen herself – by Plutarch, Pliny, Suetonius and Lucan.[234] Indeed this cultural silencing of Cleopatra's own voice was a necessary prerequisite for the dichotomies of east versus west and of oriental effeminacy versus Roman masculinity which were instituted by the Augustan propaganda regime as a means of consolidating imperial authority. As Galinsky reminds us, even in the age of Augustus Cleopatra's story served as an 'unmistakeable reminder that Egypt's attack on the West [...] had been beaten back.'[235] New Imperialist uses of Cleopatra – which represent and assign meaning to her – are predominantly self-congratulatory ones, reassuring imperial male culture of its own authority to observe, speak about, and police the boundaries of empire.

That Cleopatra functioned as a necessary and energizing Other for New Imperialist manliness is evidenced by the number of texts from this period which present her not merely in the moment of her death, as is most common in the Western tradition, but also as a subject – often a willing or knowing subject – of a Romanized male gaze. Alma-Tadema's painting *Antony and Cleopatra* (1883) shows Antony arriving at Cleopatra's royal barge in 41BC, where the queen is reclining, swathed in exotic animal furs, and hidden from public view by a golden canopy. Yet, the canopy is drawn back in such a way as to afford both Antony and the Victorian viewer a glimpse of Cleopatra in all her splendour. The conflation of imperial and erotic impulse is taken to almost fetishistic lengths in Edwin Arnold's 1882 poem 'To a Pair of Slippers in the Egyptian Exhibition, Piccadilly', in which the male Victorian speaker addresses the shoes of an ancient Egyptian woman, imagining a pharaonic beauty who 'knew Cleopatra no doubt!' and lived under

[234] See Plutarch, 'Antony' in *The Makers of Rome*, trans. by Ian Scott-Kilvert (London: Penguin, 1965), pp.223-300 (pp.292-300); 'Caesar', pp.289-291; Suetonius, 'Julius Caesar', pp.17-18; 25-26; Lucan, *Civil Wars*, X, in *The Civil War*, trans. by J.D. Duff (London: Heinemann, 1928), pp. 589-632 (pp.595-601; 617-618).
[235] Karl Galinsky, *Augustan Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp.220-221.

Roman rule during the period 'When Caesar Augustus was Egypt's Lord!'[236] The poem is extensively illustrated and bookended with two images of the imperial male gaze. In the first, Augustus himself reclines on a couch and watches the woman dance, bare-breasted, but wearing the 'tiny slippers of gold and green' (p.230) (Fig. 5). It is only with the final stanza, and the final illustration, that we learn the speaker has in his possession not only the slippers, but also the mummified remains of the woman herself:

> Oh, dead little maid of the Delta! I lay
> Your shoes on your mummy-chest back again,
> And wish that one game we might merrily play
> At 'Hunt-the-Slipper' – to see it all plain. (p.230)

The shoes, the mummy, the woman, and Egypt itself function as interchangeable signifiers of imperial authority. The poem therefore becomes a fantasy of masculine dominance after the Augustan fashion, expressed as a right to own, access and gaze upon the physical objects of empire. It is a fantasy enacted here at a textual level as a right to speak for and control the image of the Orient, on a national scale as a thirst for exhibitions displaying the acquisitions of empire, and at an individual level as an erotic desire for Cleopatra herself.[237]

The use of Roman viewer-figures, whose gaze the Victorian male is often invited to share, serves both to legitimize the framing of expansionist imperial values as erotic desire and, simultaneously, to embed that Roman parallel even more deeply into discursive structures of imperial masculinity. After all, Traill insists, in desiring Egypt, the Victorian male in the late-nineteenth century was 'only following the example of every conqueror who ever got within seizing reach of the country, in the course of the last three thousand years,'[238] and none more so than the most famous generals of the Roman world.

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[236] Edwin Arnold, 'To a Pair of Slippers in the Egyptian Exhibition, Piccadilly', *Universal Review*, 2 (October 1888), pp.230-240 (pp.235; 230).
[237] On the colonial impulse to collect, curate and display objects of empire see esp. Jacqueline Yallop, *Magpies, Squirrels and Thieves: How the Victorians Collected the World* (London: Atlantic Books, 2011); Lara Kriegel, *Grand Designs: Labour, Empire and the Museum in Victorian Culture* (London: Duke University Press, 2007); Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn, eds., *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture, and the Museum* (London: Routledge, 1998).
[238] Traill, p.118.

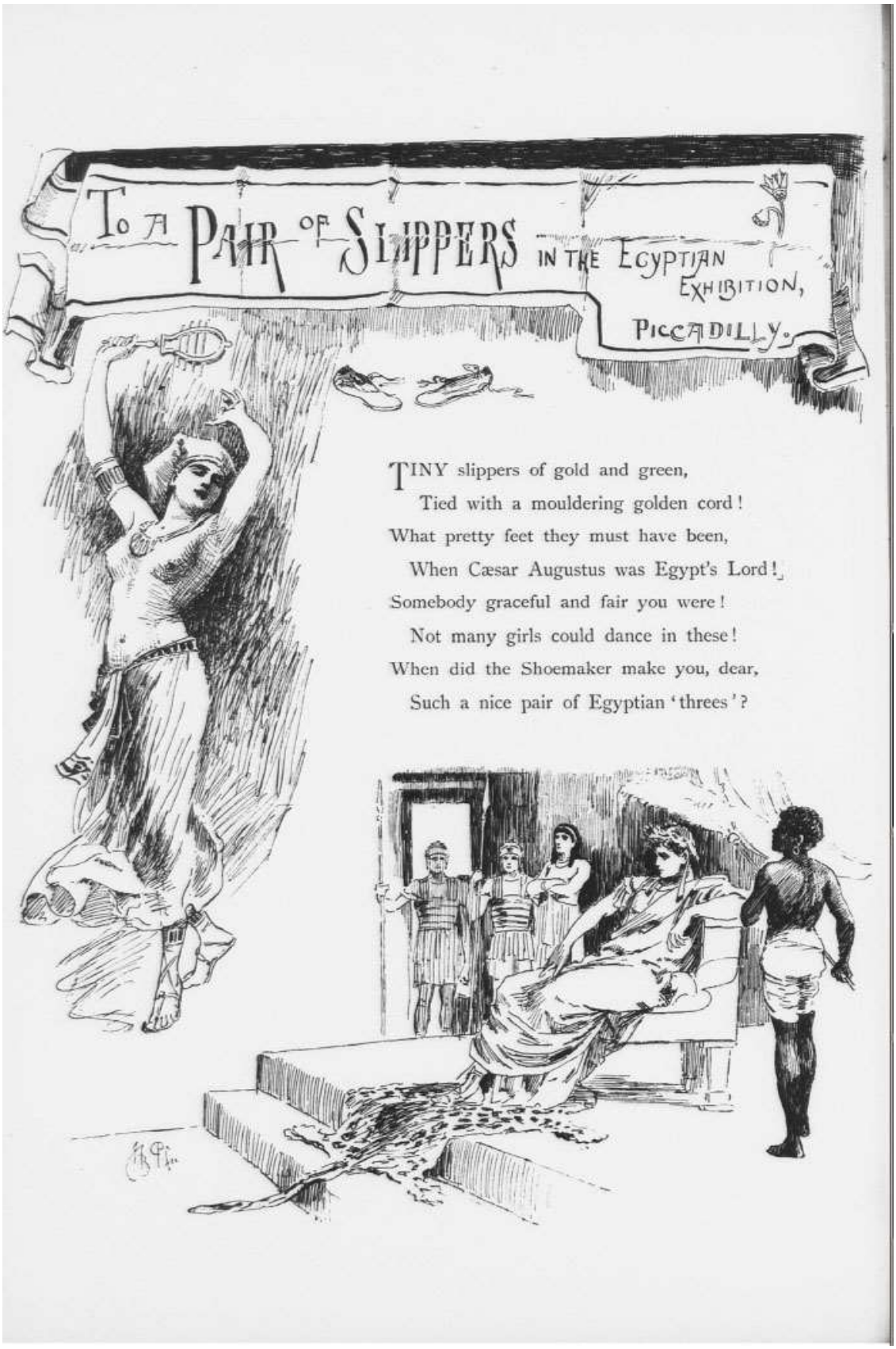

Fig. 5. 'To a Pair of Slippers in the Egyptian Exhibition, Piccadilly', p.230.

By looking upon Cleopatra, the New Imperialist is invited to imagine himself, in his relationship with Egypt and the feminine, as a new Caesar, Antony, or Augustus. He is also participating in and perpetuating the same Orientalist dichotomy of Rome and Cleopatra – of western, masculine imperialism versus mystical eastern femininity – that is staged in the works discussed above and described by Said in his seminal volume on *Orientalism*.[239] The juxtaposition of the decadent, eroticised Egyptian queen with a male Roman viewer highlights for the Victorian reader or viewer 'the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, "us") and the strange (the Orient, the East, "them")'[240] and insists upon the perceived cultural superiority of the former. Thus, despite the unofficial and indefinite nature of Britain's power in Egypt, the representation of Cleopatra allowed for the construction of narratives of dominance which were culturally current in a society where manliness was expressed with recourse to the Roman parallel.

Charlotte Brontë, even as early as 1853 and the publication of her novel *Villette*, observes the vehemence with which masculinist culture resisted any disruptions to the male gaze towards Cleopatra. In chapter nineteen of the novel, the heroine Lucy Snowe visits an art gallery and expresses her confusion and derision for a painting of Cleopatra:

> [The painting] represented a woman, considerably larger, I thought, than the life [...] She lay half-reclined on a couch: why, it would be difficult to say; broad daylight blazed round her; she appeared in hearty health, strong enough to do the work of two plain cooks; she could not plead a weak spine; she ought to have been standing, or at least sitting bolt upright. She, had no business to lounge away the noon on a sofa. She ought likewise to have worn decent garments; a gown covering her properly, which was not the case: out of abundance of material – seven-and-twenty yards, I should say, of drapery – she managed to make inefficient raiment. Then, for the wretched untidiness surrounding her, there could be no excuse. Pots and pans – perhaps I ought to say vases and goblets – were rolled here and there on the foreground; a perfect rubbish of flowers was mixed amongst them, and an absurd and disorderly mass of curtain upholstery smothered

[239] See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003), esp. ch.1, which opens with an extended analysis of the west's relationship with Egypt during the Napoleonic and British occupations.
[240] Said, p.43.

> the couch and cumbered the floor. On referring to the catalogue, I found that this notable production bore the name "Cleopatra."[241]

Lucy's anger seems at first to be directed towards the figure of the Cleopatra, whom she accuses successively of laziness, gluttony, sloth, vanity and indecency in the passage. It becomes apparent, however, that Lucy is distressed by a larger set of cultural conventions and ideologies which govern the dynamics of power and expression between the male painter/writer/viewer and the female subject. The 'perfect rubbish of flowers' and the 'mass of curtain upholstery' which surround this Cleopatra seem, in Lucy's eyes, ridiculous and random objects bearing no resemblance to the lived reality and experience of women. Yet Lucy quickly begins to recognize the seemingly-random 'Pots and pans' as the more artistic 'vases and goblets', or ciphers in the codified languages and tropes through which male culture defined, expressed and regulated itself. By interposing herself as Cleopatra's viewer, she has potentially disrupted the gendered dynamics of her culture whereby, says Berger, '*men act* and *women appear*. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at.'[242] Thus, when Mr Paul finds Lucy in the gallery he is outraged by her 'Astounding insular audacity!' in adopting and exposing the workings of the male gaze and particularly the imperialist male gaze as it applies to Cleopatra. 'How dare you, a young person,' he berates her, 'sit coolly down, with the self-possession of a garçon, and look at *that* picture?'[243] As we have seen already, Mr Paul's active, even aggressive assertiveness would become a defining characteristic of New Imperialist ideology in the closing decades of the century.

Just as Lucy's act of seeing and interpreting the Cleopatra is much more disturbing to Mr Paul than the subject of the painting itself, it is as a threat to the masculine power of reception, rather than as an embodiment of genuine colonial resistance, that Cleopatra

[241] Charlotte Brontë, *Villette* (London: Penguin, 2004), pp. 223-224.
[242] John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 2008), p.47.
[243] Brontë, *Villette*, p.225.

becomes unsettling for New Imperialist discourse. Even as she functioned as a trophy of its cultural dominance, Cleopatra reminded late-Victorian imperial manliness of a genuinely perilous historical moment wherein its central Orientalist dichotomy might have been reversed. If Cleopatra had triumphed over the Roman Empire, either in her meeting with Caesar or at the Battle of Actium, the epicentre of power and knowledge, and therefore imperial dominance, would have shifted to Alexandria, and the dominance of West over East and masculine over feminine might have been utterly undermined. Cleopatra hinted to male culture that the history of 'us' and the history of 'them' were rhetorical constructs and that masculine dominance was historically contingent.

Nonetheless, according to the gendered, Orientalist dynamics I have been describing, Cleopatra remained an absolutely necessary Other for New Imperialist masculinities which relied on the Roman parallel for self-definition and self-expression. After all, as H.A Dick noted in 1872:

> Her history, while it shocks our modern notions of morality, attracts us with its splendour, and by the world-wide importance of the events connected with it. Its scene is the cradle of human civilization. There, grouped around her, are the claimants for the throne of the world; under the shadow of the Pyramids, with the waters of the Nile gliding past, Pompey, Caesar, Antony, Augustus, close or begin their career of fame.[244]

The intertwining of Cleopatra's story with those of Rome's greatest commanders means that she is at once both Other and Ancestor to western imperial manliness. As such, texts of this period safeguard the Ptolemaic queen as a treasure of Victorian scopophilic desire to look upon the objects of empire made flesh, whilst simultaneously rejecting her on grounds of her oriental otherness and 'feminine evil'. These simultaneous impulses of rejection and protection are expressed in literary texts either through a kind of sexual delegitimization of Cleopatra as a concubine or fallen woman, or by rehabilitating her into the more

[244] H.A. Dick, 'Cleopatra: A Biographical Sketch', *Dublin University Magazine*, 78 (February 1872), pp.229-240 (pp.229-230).

traditionally patriarchal structures of Victorian society as an imperial bride. In either case, Cleopatra's meaning in the discourses of empire is circumscribed and made to serve as part of an imperialist celebration of its opposite – Caesar, Rome and the masculine, imperial west.

The restoration of Cleopatra as a wife and mother to western imperial manliness might seem inconsistent with depictions of the pharaonic temptress of gothic fictions that have been the focus of much useful scholarship in recent years. Bradley Deane's work on mummy fiction, for instance, traces a shift in the kinds of scopophilic impulses inherent in representations of Egypt in the decades following the occupation, towards a more anxious early twentieth-century treatment of the subject in which the mummy becomes an object of pure horror. Similarly, Roger Luckhurst has identified the trope of the Egyptian 'Mummy's Curse' as a particularly powerful 'dark fantasy' of the Victorian imagination.[245] These works, of course, emerge from a larger body of literary and cultural criticism by writers like Susan Gilbert and Sandra Gubar, Nina Auerbach and Rebecca Stott on misogyny and the creation of what Bram Dijkstra has termed 'fantasies of feminine evil in fin-de-siècle culture.'[246] Yet, far from being an incongruous or unrelated response to such depictions of the feminine Other, texts which rehabilitate Cleopatra offer a non-violent alternative to the kinds of physical destruction of 'feminine evil' that is commonplace in Haggard's novels of empire, but which would be less acceptable, especially in terms of masculine behavioural brutality, in a western setting. As such, the rehabilitation of Cleopatra often coincides with images of modern imperial manliness haunted by the distant, feminine, pharaonic past.

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[245] Roger Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse: The True History of a Dark Fantasy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). See also Deane, 'Mummy Fiction and the Occupation of Egypt', esp. pp.401-407.

[246] Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). See also Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (London: Yale University Press, 2000); Nina Auerbach, *Woman and the Demon: the Life of a Victorian Myth* (London: Harvard University Press, 1992); Rebecca Stott, *The Fabrication of the Late-Victorian Femme Fatale: The Kiss of Death* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992).

In ‘The Egyptian Amulet’ (1881), a short story published during the period of increasing British intervention in Egyptian affairs, the unruly protagonist Berenice (who shares her name with Cleopatra’s lesser-known sister), resists marriage to her gallant suitor, Dejarnette, to indulge ‘an irresistible fascination’ with all things Egyptian. ‘What if my soul is the soul of Cleopatra’ she wonders, ‘or even one of her maidens, dwarfed and distorted by its passage of two-thousand years through reptile, bird, and beast, into poor little me’.[247] Likewise, she refuses Dejarnette’s ring and proposal of marriage by way of an elaborate, slightly self-conscious, performance of Cleopatra-esque femininity in which she refuses to submit to masculine ‘conquest’. ‘When you know that I am finally conquered,’ she teases, ‘you can send it to me, à la Cleopatra, in a basket of figs’ (p.164). Cleopatra becomes an emblem of resistance to male social hegemony and, as such, a menacing presence in the text. During a trip to the museum of antiquities, Berenice discovers a Ptolemaic mummy wearing the same asp ring she was offered by her suitor. The rings get switched and Berenice, wearing the ring of her mummy double, becomes a demonic figure, possessed and haunted by ‘a seemingly interminable train of wild fancies, all turning on Egypt and Cleopatra and the ghosts of the dead past’ (p.166). Masculine anxiety about ‘Feminine evil’ in this text – and in others – is thus figured as a spectre of Ptolemaic Egypt which haunts the imperial male psyche. Yet rather than seek its destruction, these works undertake a rehabilitation of their modern-day Cleopatras through the marriage of the unruly female to a western husband, thereby returning her to the conventional patriarchal structures of Victorian society. ‘The Egyptian Amulet’, for instance, concludes with the marriage of Dejarnette and Berenice. When read in conjunction with the cover image of the story (Fig. 6) the ending not only closes down the threat of deviant womanhood as represented by Cleopatra, but also heroizes the Victorian male and the more patriarchal or paternalistic institutions of his society as the ‘rescuer’ of conventional femininity.

[247] ‘The Egyptian Amulet’, *London Reader of Literature, Science, Art and General Information,* 37 (June 1881), pp.164-167 (p.164).

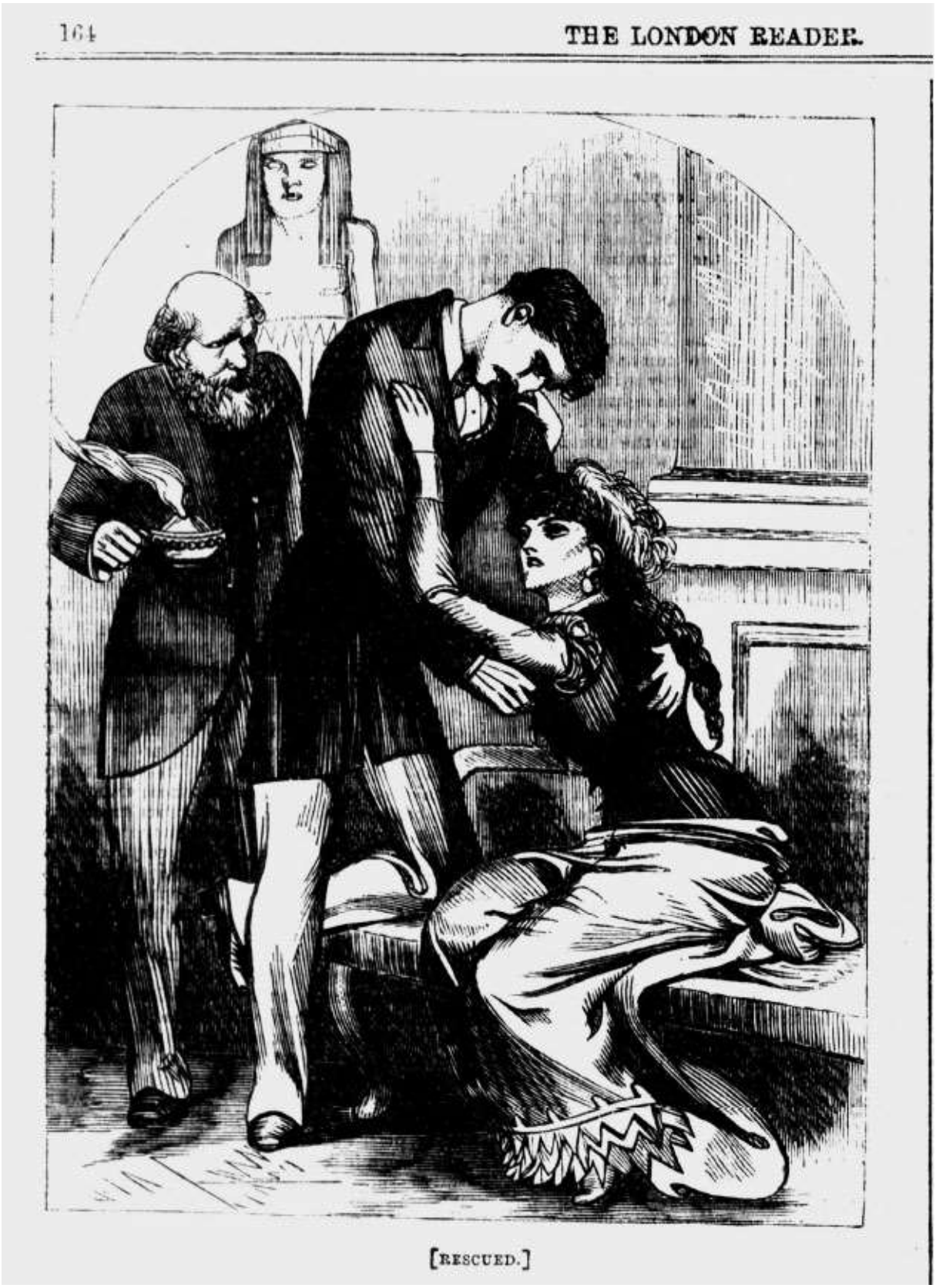

Fig. 6. ‘The Egyptian Amulet’, p.164

In addition to these popular fictions, Arthur Weigall's *The Life and Times of Cleopatra: A Study in the Origin of the Roman Empire* (1914) undertakes an historical reassessment of the reception history of Cleopatra, championing a positive reading of the queen as a creature of the occident rather than the orient. In addition to stressing the racial suitability of Cleopatra as a counterpart for Roman masculinity – 'not one drop of Oriental blood flowed in [her] veins'[248] – Weigall sketches an image of a woman whose roles as maiden, wife, mother, and widow to a Roman 'spouse' make her recognisable to and useful for constructs of New Imperialist masculinity:

> [The reader] finds that he is not dealing with a daughter of Satan, who, from her lair in the East, stretches out her hand to entrap Rome's heroes, but with mighty Caesar's wife and widow, fighting for Caesar's child; with Antony's faithful consort, striving, as will be shown, to unite Egypt and Rome in one vast empire.[249]

Weigall is adamant in stressing the legitimacy of Cleopatra's relationship with her Roman lovers and making this pairing serve the aims of the British imperial project. As a legitimately-won bride, Cleopatra is as much a fantasy of imperial possibility as the scopophilic representations which equate her body with Egypt itself. Simultaneously, the marriage framework sanctions the New Imperialist's access to and authority over the empire in much the same way as marriage authorized sexual access to women.

Whilst the figurative espousal of Cleopatra was useful for New Imperialist writers discussing imperial relationships in an abstract way, the question of Cleopatra's significance becomes much more difficult in the more specific context of political relations with Egypt in the Victorian present. After all, imperialist discourse was not advocating an equal partnership with Britain's colonial subjects any more than it was endorsing the

[248] Arthur Weigall, *The Life and Times of Cleopatra: A Study in the Origin of the Roman Empire* (London: Blackwood and Sons, 1914), p.6. Cleopatra was of Macedonian descent.
[249] Weigall, p.16.

acquisition of Egyptian wives for its men serving in the country. Instead what we find in texts which cannot comfortably reconcile ancient narratives of Roman Egypt with the political situation in the Victorian present, is a rejection of Cleopatra as a legitimate spouse. H.D. Traill writes of the relationship between Britain and Egypt in 1894: 'England is for the moment the Antony of this Cleopatra.' But it is not and can never be an equal partnership, since Cleopatra is presented throughout as a mistress at best and, at worst, a whore:

> Every rising or risen Power upon her borders, European, African, or Asiatic, has in turn possessed her, and as its strength declined has in turn been forced to yield her up to a stronger hand. To the chief States of the world she has been all that her famous Queen was to successive masters or competitors for the mastery of Rome. Every great nation in turn has looked upon her to lust after her; nor can she exist without a lover.[250]

The figuring of imperial powers in Egypt as 'lovers' and the repeated sentence structure emphasising their numbers are deployed here as a means of delegitimizing and even assigning moral blame to Cleopatra and Egypt. This is intended to legitimize in turn the cultural and imperial authority of Britain over both. Later, Traill rejects the vocabulary of marriage when talking about the future of Britain in Egypt in favour of these same weighted terms of illegitimacy. 'It may be that we shall have to break off the *liaison* at some indefinite future date', he notes; 'But if, and when, we have to part company with our Cleopatra, let those believe who can that she will prove capable of living as a *femme sole*, and without forming any new matrimonial or quasi-matrimonial tie.'[251] Bradley Deane has noted in *Masculinity and the New Imperialism* (2014) the ideological problems which the prospect of marriage between the western male and the fantastical female apparitions of mummy fiction presented for the imperial project and here, in Traill's piece, we find that Cleopatra presents a useful and classically-sanctioned means of sidestepping this

[250] Traill, pp.126-127.
[251] Traill, p.127.

predicament.[252] If Britain's relationship with Egypt is only 'quasi-matrimonial', then not only is the 'lust' of the imperialist rendered safe according to western notions of matrimony and morality, but it also becomes part of the set of behavioural traits which denote hardy New Imperialist masculinity and mark out the British imperialist as heir to the 'mastery of Rome'.

Henry Rider Haggard's imperial romance *Cleopatra; or, The Fall of Harmachis* (1889) is perhaps the best known and certainly the most widely read example of the delegitimization of Cleopatra by a Victorian writer. Haggard published *Cleopatra* after the phenomenal successes of *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) and *She* (1887), and after travelling extensively in Egypt. The novel is a fictional memoir narrated not by Cleopatra, but by Harmachis the Egyptian, a pretender who is descended from a line of kings long-since deposed by the Ptolemies. Upon reaching adulthood, Harmachis is initiated into the secret rites of the goddess Isis and proclaimed the leader of a conspiracy which aims to overthrow Cleopatra, oust the Romans from Egypt, and place Harmachis on the throne. The conspiracy fails, however, when he is seduced by Cleopatra and, having betrayed both his cause and the goddess Isis, is forced to flee into secret and self-imposed exile in Thebes. Though Harmachis's own designs on Egypt's throne are dashed, he is able to wreak revenge on the queen from a distance using ancient mystical arts. He claims, for instance, to have been the cause of Cleopatra's flight from the Battle of Actium, as well as the agent of her death. Harmachis himself outlives the queen just long enough to write his own account of the events before he is condemned to death by live burial. The text itself, we learn from the prologue, is buried with him in his sarcophagus.

Haggard's Cleopatra is used at various stages of the narrative to illustrate several of the New Imperialist responses to oriental femininity, as well as their consequences for

[252] See Deane, *Masculinity and the New Imperialism*, esp. ch.6: 'Mummies, Marriage and the Occupation of Egypt', pp.171-199.

masculine authority, described earlier in this chapter. No matter how dangerous and powerful Cleopatra might seem, however, Haggard's use of a non-western narrator, and his subtle positioning of the Roman characters in the text, suggest a reading which endorses recognisably western ideals of imperial masculinity underwritten by the perceived authority to assign meaning to the narratives of the ancient past. Cleopatra, in a strange combination of Brontë's Lucy Snowe and the figure in the portrait she was viewing, is both an exotic object of the male gaze, but also its dangerous and defiant opposite. Cleopatra is a particularly threatening enemy since she has not only learned to identify the male gaze, but also to use it as a weapon against her enemies. When Harmachis describes the physical features of 'that face which seduced Cæsar, ruined Egypt, and was doomed to give Octavian the sceptre of the world' (p.83) they are the products of a deliberate artistic process and include 'chiselled nostrils' and 'bent lashes' (p.84). Cleopatra has here transformed herself into a living sculpture, a visual signifier of authority wherein she is both subject and sculptor.

When Cleopatra learns of Harmachis's intention to assassinate her and seize her throne, she engineers his 'fall' by means of a similar hijacking of the male gaze. She orders the pretender be led into her private chambers while she sleeps:

> Here were [...] statues of woman's loveliness frozen into stone; here were draperies fine as softest silk, but woven of a web of gold; here were couches and carpets such as I never saw [...] And at the further end of the chamber, on a couch of gleaming silk and sheltered by a net of finest gauze, Cleopatra lay asleep. There she lay – the fairest thing that man ever saw – fairer than a dream, and the web of her dark hair flowed all about her. One white, rounded arm made a pillow for her head, and one hung down towards the ground. Her rich lips were parted in a smile, showing the ivory lines of teeth. (p.98)

Cleopatra has knowingly and deliberately transformed herself into a living embodiment of the female nude, arranged at the centre of a composition littered with the objects through which Victorian masculine desire and dominance were encoded. Terence Rodgers has read

the image of the queen's smiling mouth and bared teeth as an expression of anxiety over 'the loss of male self-control [...] countered by the evident threat of female sexual aggression.'[253] Yet it is equally an image of male terror at the prospect of female/oriental utterance, agency and self-representation. For the imperial male, whose identity was constructed through Roman parallels and rested upon his perceived access to and authority over the power of reception, the suggestion that Cleopatra might speak back is here a dangerous and terrible one.

Consequently, Harmachis's defeat by Cleopatra takes the form of a silencing which is utterly effeminizing. Upon kissing Cleopatra, he is rendered instantly passive and silent ('I fell upon the couch, and, though my senses still were with me, I could neither speak nor rise' [pp.138-139]), confined to the domestic spaces of the palace, and prevented from participating in political events. Haggard uses repeated images of feminine submission to capture Harmachis's conceptualization of his defeat as a loss of masculine authority. 'I had naught left to me but Cleopatra's love,' he writes; 'and I twined my life about it, and brooded on it as a widow over her only babe [...] I kissed the rod that smote me, and was her very slave' (p.148). Cleopatra, by contrast, becomes triumphantly vocal as part of this symbolic gender reversal: '"*I've won!*" she cried, shaking back her long hair. "I've won, and for the stake of Egypt, why, 'twas a game worth playing! With this dagger, then, thou wouldst have slain me, O my royal Rival [...] Now what hinders me that I should not plunge it to *thy* heart?"' (p.139)

The 'revenge' Harmachis wreaks on Cleopatra in the third volume therefore amounts to an enforced reversal of these states of dominance and passivity, speech and silence. As narrator, Harmachis is able to deny to Cleopatra all active agency in the events of 41-30BC. This includes the two decisive actions for which she is best remembered in

[253] Terence Rodgers, 'Restless Desire: Rider Haggard, Orientalism and the New Woman', *Women: A Cultural Review*, 10 (1999), pp.35-46 (p.41).

the classical tradition, namely her decision to flee from the Battle of Actium, and her suicide, staged as a gesture of defiance against Octavian Caesar, who had wanted to take her to Rome as a prisoner to appear in his triumph. In Haggard's novel it is Harmachis himself who is the agent of both these events. The novel's figuring of masculine 'revenge' as a silencing or pacification of Cleopatra is crystallised with the death of the queen in the penultimate chapter. Despite some minor disagreements among our ancient sources as to the precise cause of Cleopatra's death, most agree that she died by her own hand and by means of a venomous snake bite.[254] At any rate, the long tradition of historical reception of this event in western culture has been consistent in associating Cleopatra with the asp. Haggard's queen, however, is permitted no such self-determination. It is Harmachis who poisons her, cruelly mixing water with the draught so as to prolong the death and ensure his victim's full realization of her defeat at his hands. The traditional classical narrative of the snake is made allegorical in Harmachis's account. He himself becomes the asp, which is simultaneously an emblem of Egyptian royalty as well as of penetrative, masculine power. Furthermore, in an unsettling echo of Robert Browning's 'Porphyria's Lover', Harmachis forces back onto the dead queen the kiss which had been the cause of his own emasculation:

> I crept to the side of Cleopatra, and, now that none were left to see, I sat down on the bed and laid her head upon my knee, as once before it had been laid in that night of sacrilege beneath the shadow of the everlasting pyramid. Then I kissed her chill brow and went from the House of Death – avenged, but sorely smitten with despair! (p.294)

Here Harmachis reasserts his masculine power to act, speak and see through possession of Cleopatra's corpse. Cleopatra as corpse, and thus an entirely passive aesthetic object of the

[254] Certainly Octavian encouraged the story of the asp: Plutarch, LXXXVI.3, in *The Makers of Rome*, pp.337; 347-348; Dio, LI.11; 14, in *Roman History*, trans. by Ernest Cary, Loeb Classical Library, 9 vols. (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1914), VI:33; 39. Augustan authors Horace, Ode I.37, in *The Complete Odes and Epodes*, p.101; and Propertius, Elegy III.11.53-54, in *Propertius*, trans. by H.E. Butler, Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1912), p.217 also make reference to snakes.

male gaze, can accommodate more easily Harmachis's polarized feelings of desire and violent rejection without threatening or collapsing the binary of masculine action/speech and feminine passivity/silence which the narrator is determined to enforce.[255] To this end, Harmachis's final act of revenge and re-masculinization is not the murder itself, nor the declaration of his act to his former co-conspirators, but rather the act of writing.

By using Harmachis as narrator, Haggard ensures that Cleopatra, like Porphyria, is permitted no voice, agency or will except those ascribed to her by the male narrator. It is, in many ways, a nineteenth-century continuation of the project of imposing cultural silence on Cleopatra as an Other to western styles of masculinity, which was begun in 31BC under the Augustan regime. Yet Harmachis is a problematic narrator in this respect, given that he is emphatically un-Roman, and therefore politically and ideologically opposed to those Roman models which informed and underwrote standards of imperial manliness at the time of the novel's publication. Harmachis's narrative, for instance, makes extensive reference to the Roman occupation of Egypt as a calamitous event. Roman occupation, he claims, will result in the birth of a civilization wherein 'New Faiths shall make a mock of all thy Holies, and Centurion shall call upon Centurion across thy fortress-walls. I weep—I weep tears of blood: for mine is the sin that brought about these evils and mine for ever is their shame' (p.14). Here the subordination of Egypt to Roman colonial rule is linked to the failed masculine virtue of Harmachis himself. The narrator's personal failure to attain the standards of manliness prescribed by his religious and imperial duties is therefore figured in the text as a kind of national apocalypse. Early in the first volume, which is primarily a coming-of-age narrative charting the narrator's maturation, 'marriage' to the goddess Isis, and his being hailed as Pharaoh, Harmachis is warned by his father that 'the Roman eagle hangs on high, waiting with ready talons till such time as he may fall upon the fat wether

[255] See Elizabeth Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992) for more on Victorian depictions of the female corpse as a means of representing otherness.

Egypt and rend him' (p.30). The apocalyptic Roman eagle recurs towards the end of the text, when the personal and national consequences of Harmachis's 'fall' become apparent:

> Khem was lost, and lost was I, Harmachis. In the rush and turmoil of events, the great plot of which I had been the pivot was covered up and forgotten; scarce a memory of it remained. The curtain of dark night was closing in upon the history of my ancient Race; its very Gods were tottering to their fall; I could already, in the spirit, hear the shriek of the Roman eagles as they flapped their wings above the furthest banks of Sihor. (pp.247-248)

Harmachis's failed masculinity results in the supremacy of the Roman and the subordination of the Orient to a western power. In short, it validates the use of the Roman parallel for constructing hierarchies of masculine authority along racial, religious and cultural lines. After all, that which seems apocalyptic to Harmachis the Egyptian is, for the reader in 1889, a triumph of orientalist ideologies and imperial masculine values.

Though the novel presents itself as a counter-imperialist narrative, told 'with the lips of an Egyptian patriot of royal blood'[256] and offering readers an imagined glimpse into ancient Egyptian subjectivity and masculinity, it is perhaps better understood as a text which imposes limits on the very counter-culture to which it gives voice. After all, as Mark Bradley has observed of such imperialist receptions: 'so many of the discourses about empire were the monopoly of the dominant culture, to the extent that even counter-imperial discourses were produced and policed by the colonial power.'[257] The reader in 1889 is no more expected to align himself with Harmachis's militant rhetoric than with the 'feminine evil' of Cleopatra. Andrew Lang highlighted as much to Haggard when he proofread the manuscript prior to its publication. 'Unluckily, neither Harmachis nor Cleopatra is sympathetic', Lang wrote. 'Can't be helped [...] I like Antony, but don't feel that that

[256] Haggard, *Cleopatra*, n.p. Author's Note.
[257] Mark Bradley, 'Introduction', in *Classics and Imperialism in the British Empire*, p.22.

inexplicable person has had full justice done to him.'[258] Lang's mention of Antony here is a telling one. Antony is not allocated the kind of space in Haggard's novel that he receives in Plutarch, Shakespeare or other notable retellings of the events of 31BC. Yet he is described in the same terms of physical and communicative robustness which Robertson assigned to the New Imperialist. As a writer, for instance, Antony 'is stern on paper, and ever he sets down his thoughts as though his stylus were a spear dipped in the blood of men' (p.154). Lang's comments suggest that, despite the militant anti-Roman tone of Haggard's narrator, it is to the Romans that we must look for authoritative, stable, and recognisably western models of imperial manliness in the novel.

The most significant Roman, and distinctly masculine, presence in *Cleopatra*, is Julius Caesar. Though dead for more than two years by the time of the major events of the plot, Caesar looms over the narrative in much the same way that the figurative eagle looms over its semantic structures. Julius Caesar is never far from the minds of either Cleopatra or Harmachis and is presented, even more so than Antony, as a figure to be venerated for his masculine energy. Even the conspirators determined to drive the Romans out of Egypt must acknowledge their admiration for 'mighty Cæsar, that great man, that greatest of all men' (p.40). Such positive readings of Caesar as an aspirational model of imperial manliness are echoed in the novel's plot structure, as it tracks the rise and fall of Harmachis. Harmachis's fall in the second volume, and the tragic trajectory of the narrative thereafter, derive from a classical template and one which is normally catalysed by the hero's hubris against a divine power. In *Cleopatra* that power is Caesar himself, and Harmachis's hubris is his arrogance in thinking himself more manly than the great Roman, especially in relation to Cleopatra. Scoffing at his uncle's account of Caesar's first meeting with the queen, Harmachis jeers:

[258] Henry Rider Haggard, *The Days of My Life: An Autobiography*, ed. by C.J. Longman (Teddington: The Echo Library, 2006), p.161.

> Thou callest him great; but how can the man be truly great who has no strength to stand against a woman's wiles? Cæsar, with the world hanging on his word! Cæsar, at whose breath forty legions marched and changed the fate of peoples! Cæsar the cold! the far-seeing! the hero! – Cæsar to fall like a ripe fruit into a false girl's lap! Why, in the issue, of what common clay was this Roman Cæsar, and how poor a thing [...] Had I stood where Cæsar stood, to cool its wantonness that bale of rugs should have been rolled down the palace steps, into the harbour mud. (p.42)

Caesar, and the national and gender values he represents in late-nineteenth-century discourse, become a pivot point for the novel's ideological structures. Harmachis, of course, soon finds himself in a similar confrontation with Cleopatra and his failure to abide by his boastful assertions of celibate manliness, as well as the emasculation he undergoes as a result of this failure, seem to undermine further not only his narrative authority, but also the validity of the style of masculinity which he endorses.

Haggard's reference to the 'bale of rugs' story – the same one we saw depicted in *Punch* – is a potent reminder of the importance of this historical moment and its gendered, orientalist power dynamics for late-Victorian codifications of imperial relationships. Furthermore, it hints at the central driving impulse behind New Imperialist receptions of ancient Rome and Cleopatra: the imperialist desire to represent Cleopatra arises from a stronger cultural need to celebrate her opposite – Caesar, and the western imperial masculinity he signifies. It is an example of the centrality of the Roman parallel for New Imperialist masculinity which is best summarized by George Bernard Shaw in his surprisingly pro-imperial play *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1898). Caesar, taking his leave of Shaw's petulant and child-like Cleopatra, promises to send her a gift from Rome to soften the blow of his departure. 'What can Rome give me that Egypt cannot give me?' the young queen retorts, referring to the opulence and material splendour of the east. Caesar replies:

'You are forgetting the treasures for which Rome is most famous, my friend. You cannot buy them in Alexandria [...] her sons.'[259]

The texts I have been describing here represent the culmination of a shift from Greek parallels to Roman models in the imperial discourse of the long nineteenth century, and particularly discourse about masculinity. Ancient Greece had captured the commercial values and mercantile manliness of the empire at the beginning of the period. Yet by 1914, changes in Britain's imperial agenda in the wake of accelerated conquest and violent resistance to British imperial authority meant that it had become difficult to speak of empire without resorting to the Roman parallel. Relationships between Britain and the empire came to be figured metaphorically as encounters between ancient Rome and her subjects. The hardy, expansionist values at the heart of New Imperialist masculinity were increasingly couched in narratives and examples from the Roman past. Yet the pervasiveness of the Roman parallel in New Imperialist discourse, and the enthusiasm with which it was adopted by writers like Haggard and Cromer, also created problems for its own stability. After all, once Rome has been adopted as a framework for writing about the empire and imperial manliness at the height of their strength, writers are inevitably confronted with narratives of decline and fall which are inextricably associated with the Roman imperial model. Where the success of Rome and of generals like Julius Caesar afforded, as we have seen, positive constructions of imperial manliness, the decline of the Roman Empire supplied equivalent vocabularies for commentators who were growing increasingly anxious about decadence, degeneration and decline in the empire at large, but also in the bodies and minds of the Victorian male. In 1887, one commentator for the *Saturday Review* wrote:

> We cannot fail, if we direct our thoughts to the subject, to be struck with the analogy between our great Empire and that of ancient Rome, and at the

[259] George Bernard Shaw, 'Caesar and Cleopatra', in *Three Plays by Puritans* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), pp.127-254 (p.242).

> same time, without being pessimists, to feel that there is grave cause for anxiety lest we should share the same fate and crumble away to nothingness [...] As in ancient Rome, the manliness and vigour of our nation seem to be gradually giving way before the attacks of luxury and vice. Vice is more openly indulged in, luxury in our young men is on the increase, and if the force of circumstances and the advance of Radicalism should combine to do away with our field sports, then, indeed, the last prop and stay will be knocked away that keeps our young men what they have hitherto been – the hardiest, pluckiest, and most successful people in all parts of the world.[260]

If the empire confirmed and enhanced the masculine fortitude of the men who inhabited it, then the danger of degeneration and decline was especially pronounced for the British male living back home in Britain's cities. Indeed by contrasting the New Imperialist receptions of ancient Rome with the aestheticist and decadent writings discussed in the next chapter, I argue that the anxious, even antagonistic relationship between the New Imperialist and the Dandy-figure in fin-de-siècle culture manifests as a direct contest over authoritative uses of the Roman parallel.

[260] [Anon.], 'Modern Society', *Saturday Review*, 64 (9 July 1887), p.45.

Chapter Four

New Neronians: Decadent Rome and Late-Victorian Manliness

For conservative commentators of the fin de siècle – many of whom, as we saw in the previous chapter, were using the parallel with imperial Rome to articulate New Imperialist styles of masculine ideality – the aesthete and the dandy were figures of deviance and disruption, responsible not only for the degeneration of individual manliness but also, potentially, of the nation and the empire. Even more disturbingly, decadent writers laid claim to the same Roman parallel as their New Imperialist detractors. Far from glorifying expansionist ideologies and hardy physical discipline, however, authors such as Oscar Wilde, Villiers de l'Isle Adam, and George Moore revelled in the more illicit and disturbing aspects of the Roman past, and frequently voiced their affinity with the most notorious of Roman emperors – Nero. Whilst such controversial receptions were typical of the playfully self-parodic tone of the decadence movement, I argue that they also indicate a very genuine attempt by fin-de-siècle writers to disassociate decadent ideologies from Gibbonian models of degeneration and decline. For Walter Pater's serious and sober defence of aestheticist principles in *Marius the Epicurean* (1885), this meant a reconfiguration of the downward trajectory of decline and fall into a more organic model whereby cultural and imperial greatness flourish and decay as part of a natural, cyclical process. For Decadents like Wilde's Dorian Gray, who finds 'a subtle pleasure in the thought that he might really become to the London of his own day what to imperial Neronian Rome the author of the Satyricon once had been,'[261] the parallel with ancient Rome offered a means of rejecting conventional morality as an artistic principle. Thus could Nero be valued as an artist and performer, and placed at the heart of fin-de-siècle formulations of the aesthete, the flâneur, and the dandy. Building on Norman Vance's assertion that 'for aesthetes, if not for puritans and empire-builders, there was much to be

[261] Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (London: Ward Lock and Co., 1891), pp.143-44.

said for this other Rome, civilized, leisured, quite possibly corrupt by the severe standards of Victorian morality,'[262] this chapter traces the growing cultural fascination with Roman decadence in fin de siècle culture, and the use of decadent Rome as a proxy for debating the social, moral and physical condition of London and the metropolitan male who inhabits it. By tracing the divergent reception histories of these two Romes – the imperial and the decadent – I argue that late-Victorian metropolitan manliness was invested in the construction of a revisionist counter narrative to the Gibbonian model of 'decline and fall', and especially of decline and fall as being catalyzed by decadent (and therefore failed or diseased) masculine vigour.

4.1 Rome and Fever: The Metropolitan Male and the Rhetoric of the New

Nowhere was late-Victorian awareness and anxiety about the new more acute than in discourses relating to Britain's urban spaces and populations. As the first country to undergo industrialization, Britain in the nineteenth century experienced a period of urbanization and urban population growth that was unprecedented in both scale and intensity. Indeed, census records show that where once, at the turn of the nineteenth century, only 33% of the total population of England and Wales resided in towns and cities; by 1900 this figure had risen to 78%.[263] The consequence was a cultural need among writers to find new ways of conceptualizing and speaking about the metropolis and its inhabitants. Joseph McLaughlin refers to this phenomenon in the opening chapter of *Writing the Urban Jungle* (2000) as 'An Irritation to Metaphor', and tracks the use of sanitary metaphors in Victorian writing about London, which was at once the glittering capital of empire but also, as Dr Watson describes it in the first of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, 'that great cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers of the Empire are

[262] Vance, *The Victorians and Ancient Rome*, p.248.
[263] Data from R.J Morris and Richard Roger, *The Victorian City: A Reader in British History, 1820-1914* (London: Longman, 1993), p.3.

irresistibly drained.'[264] In light of the shaping influence that imperial and metropolitan landscapes – both real and textual – exercised each upon the other, it is not surprising that, in tandem with the sanitary metaphor used by Watson and analysed by McLaughlin, the ancient Roman city becomes a recurring metaphorical framework for talking about the metropolis. The power of the Roman parallel in imperialist discourse at this time accounts for the corresponding cultural currency of the Roman city for constructing lines of similarity and difference, condemnation and celebration, in writing about the metropolis and the metropolitan male who inhabited it.

Periodical sources from the 1890s show an increased public interest in the physical spaces of ancient Rome, which no doubt reflects the popular interest in the recent Italian excavations of the Forum Romanum, but which go beyond the mere reporting of archaeological or historical facts to speak to very contemporary experiences and anxieties in British society.[265] The 1890 article 'A Day in Ancient Rome' opens with a clear statement of difference that, in terms of the daily lives of the working populations, 'two cases of more striking apposition could not be quoted'[266] than those of ancient Rome and modern London. The main point of difference, we are told, is 'the general exodus from suburbs to town which takes place in London at eight or nine every morning' and which 'in Rome could have no existence, for Rome possessed no suburbs' (p.25). The Victorian urban experience is set up as distinctly different from that of 'the age of Nero or Domitian' (p.26). Yet the remainder of the article conducts readers on an imagined tour of the ancient city and some of 'the great businesses and manufactories' (p.25) operating therein, and the overriding impression is one of similarity, or at least recognisability, between ancient

[264] From Arthur Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet* [1887], cited in Joseph McLaughlin, *Writing the Urban Jungle: Reading Empire in London From Doyle to Eliot* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000), p.2.
[265] On the excavations of Rosa in the Roman Forum, which took place between 1870 and 1885, with a second wave commencing in 1898, see: Jesse Benedict Carter, 'A Decade of Forum Excavation and the Results for Roman History', *The Classical Journal*, 5 (March 1910), pp.202-211.
[266] [Anon.], 'A Day in Ancient Rome,' *Argosy* (July 1890), pp.25-30 (p.25). Hereafter cited parenthetically.

Rome and modern London. In the factories and workshops of Rome, for instance, the author insists that the only difference in appearance and functionality compared with equivalent factories in Britain would be 'the absence of machinery, and the natural deficiency in certain trade improvements with which two thousand years have rendered men more familiar' (p.25). In a Roman publisher's ' – for there were publishers in ancient Rome no less than in modern London – [...] the same division of labour prevails as in a printing office' (pp.25-26) and the same tasks carried out.

Similarly, in an article in the *National Review,* Edward J. Gibbs compares data on the size, population, distribution of wealth and the availability of social care in Rome to complain of aristocratic privilege and class inequality in London itself. Gibbs concludes that: 'both in population and wealth the city of Rome under the Empire was fully equal to modern London; while in the magnificence and beauty of its public buildings, in the splendour of its gratuitous entertainments, and in the profusion of its liberality towards the poor, it was much superior.'[267] As a space both foreign and familiar to the late-Victorian imagination, the Roman city could be used as a warning tale or negative comparison through which to frame this kind of critique of British society. Social ills arising from the modernity of the age could be lamented in public discourse whilst posing little real threat to the stability of a collective national identity for Britain as an imperial power, since recourse to the Roman parallel afforded to these ills a sense of precedent and of being part of an historical tradition in an increasingly urbanized world.

Equally, for those wishing to celebrate the novelty of the urban experience, the imperial Roman parallel also facilitated a corresponding, celebratory narrative of London as the glittering centre of empire. Indeed, as the opening lines of Henry James's *Golden Bowl* (1904) suggest, the boundaries of representation and reality within the Roman

[267] Edward J. Gibbs, 'Ancient Rome and Modern London', *National Review,* 19 (June 1892), pp.516-525, (p.525).

metaphor become increasingly blurred in fin-de-siècle discourses on modern urban experience:

> The Prince had always liked his London, when it had come to him; he was one of the modern Romans who find by the Thames a more convincing image of the truth of the ancient state than any they have left by the Tiber. Brought up on the legend of the City to which the world paid tribute, he recognised in the present London much more than in contemporary Rome the real dimensions of such a case. If it was a question of an Imperium, he said to himself, and if one wished, as a Roman, to recover a little the sense of that, the place to do so was on London Bridge, or even, on a fine afternoon in May, at Hyde Park Corner. It was not indeed to either of those places that these grounds of his predilection, after all sufficiently vague, had, at the moment we are concerned with him, guided his steps; he had strayed, simply enough, into Bond Street, where his imagination, working at comparatively short range, caused him now and then to stop before a window in which objects massive and lumpish, in silver and gold, in the forms to which precious stones contribute, or in leather, steel, brass, applied to a hundred uses and abuses, were as tumbled together as if, in the insolence of the Empire, they had been the loot of far-off victories.[268]

Here London has so successfully attained the power and splendour of an imperial capital that to walk the streets of the modern metropolis has become the closest a man can come to experiencing the reality of life under the Roman Empire. Prince Amerigo's Italian nationality serves to authenticate and underwrite his recognition of the national values of ancient Rome in the modern British nation. As the Prince moves through the urban landscape, we are invited to view a succession of landmarks including London Bridge and Hyde Park Corner as surpassing the greatness of their ancient Roman equivalents.

However, there is a problem, James suggests, with any simple refiguring of London and its inhabitants as a new Rome and new Romans, and it is a problem of metropolitan masculinity in an imperial society. With the act of turning away from these great monuments of imperial infrastructure and governance, the Prince seems to embody a

[268] Henry James, *The Golden Bowl* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.1.

growing sense of dissatisfaction with the meaning of Rome in New Imperialist discourse, and with New Imperialist ideology more broadly as a basis for masculine identity. If masculinity were solely 'a question of Imperium', why then should the Prince, seeking aesthetic and imaginative fulfilment, feel compelled into Bond Street and a very different urban landscape? One explanation lies in James's description of the objects on display. Though the intended function of the imperial 'loot' is presumably to emphasize the commercial and military power of the British empire, the rough materials and 'massive', 'lumpish' nature of the objects on display hint at a brutish quality not just about the imperial project, but also the men who serve it. James's prince is also perturbed by an apparent absence of connoisseurship in the collecting and displaying of the artefacts, which are indiscriminately 'tumbled together' in the shop windows. In his urban wanderings, his sensitivity to the objects as commodities, and his longing for the ordering of those objects according to some aesthetic principle, the prince bears a striking resemblance to Walter Benjamin's archetypal flâneur, and to the aesthete and the decadent of late-nineteenth-century culture.[269] He is a far cry from the hardy imperialists discussed in the previous chapter. Indeed, he could easily fall foul of Dr Watson's hostile characterization of such urban males in Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* (1888) as 'the loungers and idlers of empire.'[270] Imperialist discourse had found it relatively uncomplicated to figure the British empire as a new and improved Roman empire, and the New Imperialist as a modern-day Roman. However, the transposition of that parallel to the urban landscape of the imperial capital proved much more complex, with ancient Rome becoming a contested space as the

[269] See Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (London: Belknap Press, 1999) for Benjamin's figuration of the flâneur, the indebtedness of that figuration to the writings of Charles Baudelaire, and the relationship between the flâneur and the marketplace. For more recent discussions of the flâneur see especially: Gregory Shaya, 'The Flâneur, the Badaud, and the Making of a Mass Public in France, 1860–1910', *American Historical Review*, 109 (2004), pp.41-77; Susan Buck-Morss, 'The Flaneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering', *New German Critique*, 39 (1986), pp.99-140; Petra Kuppers, 'Moving in the Cityscape: Performance and the Embodied Experience of the Flâneur', *New Theatre Quarterly*, 15 (1999), pp.308-317.

[270] Arthur Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet* (London: Street and Smith, 1900), p.7.

new metropolitan male challenged the traditional Victorian uses of antiquity, and particularly in the formulation of gender ideals.

Writing to Henry Rider Haggard in 1899, Lord Walsingham (1843-1919) expressed neatly, if anxiously, the perceived correlation between London's increasingly urbanized spaces and contemporary fears over the 'health and vigour' of British masculinity both at an individual and national level:

> Take the people away from their natural breeding grounds, thereby sapping their health and strength in cities such as nature never intended to be the permanent home of man, and the decay of their country becomes only a matter of time. In this matter, as in many others, ancient Rome has a lesson to teach.[271]

In a move consistent with the ostensibly masculinist rhetoric discussed in the previous chapter, Walsingham locates positively charged concepts of health and strength and natural growth in Britain's rural landscapes. Conversely, 'decay' and the physical, mental, moral and national degeneration implied by the 'sapping' of that strength, are presented as urban phenomena and serve as the negative pole in a binary which promotes New Imperialist notions of masculine ideality. If empire, as we have seen in the previous chapter, was a space of masculine rejuvenation in the late nineteenth century, and one which increasingly found expression through the Roman parallel, then the 'lesson' of Rome that Walsingham refers to is surely the Gibbonian narrative of the 'decline and fall' of such an empire as a consequence of 'decayed' masculine virtue. After all, as Daniel Pick reminds us, it was felt that 'a relative deterioration in the body of the city population' could have 'disintegrative effects upon the nation and the empire.'[272] By framing his concerns about urbanization in these terms, Walsingham is drawing upon a number of fin-de-siècle scripts which had

[271] Lord Walsingham, 'Letter to Henry Rider Haggard (1899)'. Quoted in Vance, *The Victorians and Ancient Rome*, p.257.
[272] Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder 1848-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.184.

begun to equate physical weakness with diseased or degenerate masculinity, but which also used decadent Rome – particularly the Rome of Nero – to designate such masculine deviance as unnatural, criminal, and liable to spread among urban populations like fever.

Earlier in the century, Charles Dickens had described the urban adventures of the young David Copperfield in terms which directly foreshadow those deployed by conservative commentators of the fin de siècle. The young David, eager to act the part of the 'young gentleman' and to be 'thought [...] manly,'[273] experiences a number of new sensations on a visit to the London theatre:

> Being then in a pleasant frame of mind (from which I infer that poisoning is not always disagreeable in some stages of the process), I resolved to go to the play. It was Covent Garden Theatre that I chose; and there, from the back of a centre box, I saw Julius Caesar and the new Pantomime. To have all those noble Romans alive before me, and walking in and out for my entertainment, instead of being the stern taskmasters they had been at school, was a most novel and delightful effect. But the mingled reality and mystery of the whole show, the influence upon me of the poetry, the lights, the music, the company, the smooth stupendous changes of glittering and brilliant scenery, were so dazzling, and opened up such illimitable regions of delight, that when I came out into the rainy street, at twelve o'clock at night, I felt as if I had come from the clouds, where I had been leading a romantic life for ages, to a bawling, splashing, link-lighted, umbrella-struggling, hackney-coach-jostling, patten-clinking, muddy, miserable world.[274]

This outing is an awakening for David primarily because it constitutes his first encounters with both the ancient Roman world and the amusements of the London metropolis that have not been mediated and superintended by adult male authority figures. Unlike the Rome of the Victorian schoolroom, with its associations of arduous rote learning – hence David's recollections of 'having his ears boxed with the Latin Grammar' (p.53) – the Rome of the popular theatre is presented as a dizzying, dreamlike succession of sensory

[273] Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.279.
[274] Dickens, p.279.

pleasures heightened no doubt by another first – inebriation. Yet David's transition from the heat and noise of these Roman 'regions of delight' to the rain and chill of the city streets outside is a vertiginous one, which leaves him disoriented and feverish for the remainder of the evening. Upon returning to his hotel, David's 'fast beating heart' is attributed to 'the play [which] was still running high' (p.280) in his mind, the images of Rome, being twice described as 'revolving' in the kaleidoscopic, almost hallucinatory motion of fever dreams. Indeed, when David does sleep, we are told he 'dreamed of ancient Rome' (p.282). I suggest that the episode represents a prefiguration of what Andrew Smith in *Victorian Demons* (2004) has identified in much later works as the growing use of pathological models and the language of medical and scientific discourse for talking about fin-de-siècle masculinities.[275] Smith argues that the fin de siècle witnesses literary representations of masculinity – often couched in gothic tropes – locked in a two-way dialogue with medical, social and legal constructions of the middle class male, with each influencing the terms by which the other is understood and expressed. Conservative masculine scripts, codified in these terms, are engineered to serve as defences from any perceived threats to dominant masculine ideology. The episode from Dickens shows that conservative uses of Roman decadence function in much the same way – indeed they are often interchangeable with the vocabulary of fever – and are deployed as part of the same gendered project of tracing social deviance as medical abnormality.

The terms of this Romano-medical metaphor become noticeably intensified in the final decades of the nineteenth century, in direct correlation with mounting fears over the 'new', and with what Smith calls the 'notion of crisis [...] staged within the dominant masculinist culture.'[276] Thus, where David Copperfield's Roman revels produced a flush of euphoric fever, but left no lasting damage in terms of his developing sense of masculine

[275] Andrew Smith, *Victorian Demons: Medicine, Masculinity and the Gothic at the Fin-de-Siècle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).
[276] Smith, p.1.

identity, the metropolitan male of the late nineteenth century is assigned a certain culpability by conservative commentators, for his role in perpetuating and popularizing notions of aesthetic and decadent manliness. The body of the metropolitan male becomes a locus of fear, but also a locus of blame as the 'fever' of urban, pleasure-seeking manliness comes to be figured as virulent, degenerative disease, whilst the parallel with ancient Rome in discourse concerning the metropolis and its inhabitants, becomes increasingly Neronian.

In an 1875 article 'London Amusements', A. Marshall laments the lack of wholesome entertainments in the capital, the 'too aesthetical delights [of] the metropolitan music hall,'[277] and the degenerative effects of both upon the urban population in precisely these terms. For instance, Marshall insists, the 'noise' and 'coarseness' of the music hall spectacle, supplemented by 'beer and porter, pipes, whisky, and brandy' (p.197), result in 'a dissipation of the head and the heart, and also of the liver and the lungs' (p.197). Read metaphorically as organs of conscience, morality and emotion, the inclusion of 'head' and 'heart' on this list suggests a degeneration of masculinity that is at once physical, mental, moral and social. In any case, its breeding ground is the metropolis and its symptoms manifest as disease in the male body. Marshall reinforces the notion of aesthetic pleasure as masculine disease when describing the aftermath of an evening's 'debauch' in the music hall:

> A thick mist of obscurity, relieved only by a headache and a sense of having paid to be brutalized, must be the companions he takes with him to bed [...] No one ever got improvement from a music hall – happy they who only got headaches' (p.197).

Such euphemistic descriptions of the music hall entertainments and their side effects as the 'paid [...] companions' of the metropolitan male can be understood in the context of

[277] A. Marshall, 'London Amusements', *Belgravia: A London Magazine* (December 1875), pp.197-202 (p.197). Hereafter cited parenthetically.

contemporary debates over the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1868 and 1869, the subsequent movements calling for the repeal of this legislation, and medical writings on the spread of venereal disease. According to these altered terms of the medical metaphor, the popular theatre as a source of entertainment takes on the social stigma of prostitution. The aesthetic pleasures of the theatre become sexualized and the theatregoer himself assigned a portion of social and moral blame for his actions at a time when, as Smith notes: 'it was the behaviour of the middle class client, rather than the working-class prostitute, which concerned the medical profession and social reformists alike.'[278]

The intensification of the medical metaphor from one of fever to one of degenerative disease is paralleled by the increasingly frequent use of decadent Rome – and particularly the Rome of Nero – by anxious conservative commentators. Thus Marshall's polemic against London's popular amusements opens with a rallying cry for more wholesome entertainments and an overtly Neronian comparison:

> Cannot some one invent a new amusement? […] Nero – but every one knows this – offered half his kingdom for a new pleasure; yet, to be sure, his ideas of pleasure were so exceedingly debased that we are glad no one responded to the call. A new pleasure for Nero could only have meant a new iniquity; and iniquities were exhausted under his empire. We live, however, under Christian civilization, not under Roman corruption; and it should not be hard to find a new pleasure of the licit and intellectual kind. (p.197)

The acerbic tone of the opening, as well as the persistently negative values assigned to Nero as a sign, are typical of conservative discourse on the new, which insisted on the inevitable progression from decadence to degeneration to death, and which positioned conventional masculine and national values of 'intellect', 'empire' and 'Christian civilization' within a positive rhetoric of health and growth. Thus, in his comparison of the

[278] Smith, p.95.

ancient Pompeiian theatre with those of nineteenth century London, Marshall concludes that, just as 'Music halls are degenerated theatres' (p.200), so too are the 'plebeian entertainments' of the music hall degenerated forms of 'the more muscular features of out-door and manly excitement' (p.200). The metropolitan male in this formulation is merely a debased form of the Victorian gentleman, the Muscular Christian, or the New Imperialist. According to such hostile codifications of masculinity, the emperor Nero becomes the embodied enemy of the kinds of gentlemanly or hardy, masculinist identities I have been discussing in earlier chapters. Marshall's reader in 1875 is encouraged to question not the terms of the parallel, but his own place in the binary it represents. He is encouraged to declare for and defend conventional constructions of physically and morally robust manliness, or else to accept the associations of deviance and degeneracy which have been the primary meaning inbuilt into the Neronian connection since antiquity.

The prevailing image of Nero that survives from classical sources, the most significant of these being Tacitus's *Annals* and Suetonius's *Twelve Caesars*, is one of early promise followed by a swift decline into tyranny, cruelty, and criminality. The emperor's decadence is presented as both a symptom and a cause of his decline in our ancient sources. Nero's performances as an actor and musician and his famous recitation of the 'Sack of Troy' during the fire of Rome in 64BC, are overshadowed in their infamy only by the murders which are attributed to him.[279] Ancient sources implicate Nero, to varying degrees, in the murders of his step-brother Britannicus; his mother Agrippina; Seneca, his tutor and advisor; and two of his wives, Octavia and Poppaea.[280] These murders are, of course, additional to the systematic persecution of Christians during Nero's reign and the building of his vast Golden House over the site of the destruction of the fire. It is this

[279] See Suetonius, 'Nero', 38 in *The Twelve Caesars*, pp.236-237; Tacitus, *Annals*, XV in *The Annals of Imperial Rome*, trans. by Michael Grant (London: Penguin, 1996), pp.360-367 on Nero during the fire.
[280] See Tacitus, pp.290-292 on the death of Britannicus; pp.312-318 on the murder of Agrippina; pp.375-378 on the death of Seneca; p.384 on the murder of Poppaea and her unborn child. See also Suetonius, 'Nero', 35, in *The Twelve Caesars*, p.234 on the execution of Octavia.

Neronian legacy of decadent criminality and criminal decadence that Marshall evokes when he assumes a universal familiarity among his readers ('everybody knows this' [p.197]) with the history and meaning of the last of the Julio-Claudian emperors. Indeed, with the exception of decadent writers of the fin de siècle discussed later in this chapter, there are remarkably few attempts by nineteenth-century writers to reassess conventional meanings of Nero as an emblem of deviant or failed masculinity. Charles Merivale's *History of the Romans Under the Empire* (1858) does not call into question the negative associations ascribed to Nero, nor the processes by which those meanings have been transmitted and acquired. Rather, he insists upon the reliability of Tacitus and Suetonius as sources for Nero's deviance:

> With some allowance only for the extravagance of colouring, we must accept in the main the verisimilitude of the picture they have left us of this arch tyrant, the last and most detestable of the Caesarian family.[281]

It is a legacy of arch tyranny, Christian persecution, and decadent sensuality which was seized upon time and again by conservative writers of the 1890s, who found in Nero a useful antagonist to their traditional values. Religious literatures of the late-nineteenth century, exemplified by the enormously popular toga plays which became popular in this period, were especially vehement in placing Nero at the heart of a rhetoric of hostility towards the new, and particularly towards alternative notions of manliness which deviated from traditional understandings of morality as a foundational principle of Victorian masculinity.

The so-called toga play captured the imagination of the British theatregoing public from the 1880s until the almost wholesale transposition of the genre onto film in the early twentieth century, where it would evolve into the iconic classical epics of 1950s cinema.

[281] Charles Merivale, *History of the Romans Under the Empire*, 8 vols. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1904), VII:2.

Utilizing tropes from earlier nineteenth-century melodrama, the spectacular elements of classical burlesque, and capitalizing on the growing taste for revivals of ancient drama, the toga play staged Pagan-Christian conflict through plots relating the moral fortitude of virtuous characters facing 'persecut[ion] by Roman villains such as Tigellinus and the Emperor Nero [...] who act on such malign motives or disturbed psychological states as greed, lust, vanity, avarice, envy, ambition, jealousy, megalomania, and sadism.'[282] The toga plays were religious in moral content, even, as the contemporary commentator G.W Foote observed, to the point of privileging earnestness and piety over dramatic or literary merit. 'All the pagans are wicked people – tyrants, sycophants, intriguers, assassins, drunkards, thieves, and prostitutes. All the Christians are good people – pure, benevolent and merciful', Foote writes, frustrated with the lack of subtler characterization. His frustrations extend to the audiences of toga drama, whom, he quips, 'might be called a congregation. It seemed to be the emptyings of the churches and chapels of London. Most of the people […] walked as though they were advancing to pews, and took their seats with reverential expectation.' [283] Codes of audience response served to bolster the religio-moral essence of the toga play, which positioned Nero as an enemy and oppressor.

Early examples of this form of toga play include W.S. Gilbert's *Pygmalion and Galatea* (1871) and the 1883 play *Claudian*, whilst turn-of-the-century adaptations of Lew Wallace's *Ben Hur* and Henry Sienkiewicz's *Quo Vadis* illustrate the scale and spectacle of the genre and mark the zenith of its popularity. The appetite of the British public for this spectacular and morally prescriptive drama was whetted in the intervening years by plays like Wilson Barrett's *The Sign of the Cross*, which toured the North of England in 1895 and opened in London in 1896.[284] Barrett's treatment of plot and character borrows heavily

[282] David Mayer, *Playing Out the Empire: Ben Hur and Other Toga Plays and Films* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), p.5.
[283] G. W. Foote, *The Sign of the Cross: A Candid Criticism of Mr Wilson Barrett's Play* (1896), cited in Richard Foulkes, *Church and Stage in Victorian England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.209.
[284] See Mayer, pp.104-114 for critical commentary on *The Sign of the Cross.*

from *Quo Vadis* in this tale of Marcus Superbus, a Roman prefect in the time of Nero and a favourite among the women of the court. Despite rejecting the suggestion of marriage on the grounds that he 'hate[s] the tedious formalities of divorce',[285] Marcus falls in love with the Christian girl Mercia, converting to the Christian faith in order to become spiritually wed to her, and facing death in the arena rather than return to the orgiastic decadence of Nero's court and the manipulative advances of the lady Berenis and the Empress Poppaea.

Though Barrett's Nero does not appear on stage until the third act, the audience are continually reminded of the Emperor's constant malevolent presence in the lives of the Roman people through a series of cues encoded in the language, structure and staging of the first act. Most importantly, a statue of Nero is positioned on stage during the opening street scene, appearing to oversee the suffering for which he is responsible. This brutality includes physical violence towards captive Christians by the Roman slaver Servilius, who insists that capturing Christians 'pays well and is good sport too' (p.125) under the current regime, where a captured Christian can fetch up to 200 sesterces. The systematic persecution of Christians is not just a religious persecution, but also a form of economic tyranny exercised by the emperor over the citizenry, and designed to perpetuate the political hegemonies and extravagant lifestyles of Nero and his court. The Christians in this early scene become a commodity and brutality a trade under such an emperor, who dines at banquets costing upwards of four million sesterces, yet exploits the poverty of his own people, turning them into agents of surveillance and repression, and corrupting in them any instincts or virtues which a Victorian audience might accept as conventionally manly or virtuous.

Nero's first words in the play are reported, rather than delivered in person, and the expectation they establish is one of viciousness and paranoia:

[285] Wilson Barrett, 'The Sign of the Cross' in *Playing Out the Empire,* pp.104-187. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

> To my well-beloved servant, Marcus Superbus, greeting. I learn that the accursed sect of the Christians, so far from being exterminated, is increasing, and that they plot together to destroy my throne and life. They will not bow down to me nor call me king nor pay tribute unto me. They are murderers and fanatics, venomous and bloodthirsty. Arrest all suspects – put them to the torture until they confess – spare neither man, woman nor child. If you prove any guilty, slay instantly those who are dangerous. The others I will send to the beasts in the arena. Show mercy to none. On thee, Marcus my prefect, be the whole responsibility to purge Rome of these pests. Caesar, Emperor. (pp. 137-38)

The excessive strength of this rhetoric, the fixation on violence and criminality, and the framing metaphor of 'extermination' of the Christian 'pest', harness all the conventionally negative aspects of Nero's legacy and couch them in the language of Philistine condemnations of decadent or non-conventional masculinities. When the emperor does appear, however, he is utterly unmanly, and his failed masculinity takes the dual form firstly of infantilization at the hands of his wife Poppaea, who 'moves and speaks with great authority' (p.163), while Nero stammers and defers to her commands; and, secondly, of effeminacy. Surrounded by a retinue of heralds and guards in exotic leopard skins, languishing in ornate sets, and clad himself in 'soft, cream-coloured silk, richly embroidered with gold, scarcely reaching to the knee' (pp.161-62), Nero becomes an unsettling variant of the oriental 'beauty' that we saw in contemporary Victorian paintings of Cleopatra. That this kind of display amounts to a loss or failure of manliness is highlighted by Nero's hanging 'on the necks of two feminine-looking boys', who 'mime and smirk with all the airs and graces of girlhood' (p.161). In the Victorian toga play, then, Nero becomes a master sign for any act of speech, thought or conduct which must be rejected according to its moralising agenda, and it is through Nero that Barrett emphasises the perceived connections being drawn in conservative discourse between decadence, immorality and failed masculinity.

The Reverend F.W. Farrar affirms this link in no uncertain terms in a preface to his ancient Roman novel *Darkness and Dawn; or Scenes in the Days of Nero, An Historic Tale* (1891):

> I have endeavoured to choose a title for this book which shall truly describe its contents. The 'Darkness' of which I speak is the darkness of a decadent Paganism; the 'Dawn' is the dawn of Christianity.[286]

By plotting 'good' and 'bad' in these terms, Farrar reinforces the same binary oppositions of light/dark, growth/decay, health/disease, virtue/criminality and Christian/Pagan that characterised Marshall's 'London Amusements', and which underpin larger conservative discourses on the new and their implications for gender ideals at the fin de siècle. Indeed, Farrar succeeds in incorporating several of these sets of binary opposites into a single passage describing the murder of Britannicus:

> [Nero] decided that the deed should be done at some private meal, and at the hands of one of the boy's tutors, who never thought of shrinking from the infamy. In that midnight and decadence of a dying Paganism the crime of ordinary murder was too cheap to excite remorse. (p.270)

An important point to make here is that it is not a simplistic Christian/pagan division that is driving Farrar's construction of moral manliness. Pagan characters can possess qualities indicative of masculine virtue. As one contemporary reviewer noted, the use of these pairs of opposites as axes of ideal or failed masculinity means that there is scope in the novel for the reader to 'set off against the Neronian orgies the better side of Paganism, in the frugal simplicity of the household of Vespasian, the gentleness, humanity and genuine love of goodness […] of Seneca […] Epictetus, Thrasea, and Soranus.'[287] These characters, despite their Pagan faith or service to the Neronian regime, are redeemed to a degree by

[286] F.W. Farrar, *Darkness and Dawn; or, Scenes in the Days of Nero, an Historic Tale* (London: Longmans, 1893), p.vii. Hereafter cited parenthetically.
[287] H. Furneaux, '*Darkness and Dawn, or Scenes in the Days of Nero, an Historic Tale* by F.W. Farrar. Longmans. 1891', *Classical Review*, 6 (March 1892), pp.118-119 (p.118).

qualities indicative of masculine virtue according to nineteenth-century ideologies. This explains why many Victorian writers found in the austerity and self-restraint of Roman Stoicism, a useful halfway house for designating 'good' i.e. potentially Christian traits. Nonetheless, the same reviewer is unconvinced by Farrar's 'taking the bold step of representing Britannicus as partially, and Octavia as altogether Christian.'[288]

Nero's degeneracy lies in his wilful rejection of the advice and good examples of characters like Seneca and Octavia, and his determination to 'give himself up, heart and soul, to selfish aestheticism and voluptuous delight' (p.105). In a novel which deals with the persecution of Christians under Nero, 'Darkness', written here as 'midnight', can signify decadence almost as directly as it signifies pagan oppression. Nero is thereby doubly monstrous both, to use Farrar's words, as 'Emperor and Æsthete' (p.105). To this end, there are few descriptions of Nero's crimes in the novel where aestheticism and decadence are not directly cited either as symptoms or causes of the problem. A particularly chilling example of this comes after the murder of Agrippina, when Nero goes to view his mother's body:

> The colour fled from his cheeks; but after a moment or two he grew bolder. The matricide was still an aesthete. 'I did not know,' he said, 'that I had so beautiful a mother.' (pp.165-66)

The episode is an expansion of Tacitus's *Annals* 14.9 and in it Farrar's mention of Nero's blanching when confronted with his mother's corpse – the physical evidence of his crimes – suggests a partial, or at least potential recognition by the emperor of the magnitude of his wrongdoing. It is in many ways a natural revulsion to the altogether unnatural crime of matricide, as well as the natural grief of a son for a deceased parent. Yet these 'natural' responses are quickly overridden by aesthetic impulses, as Nero begins to perceive the

[288] Furneaux, p.118.

corpse as an art object, whose meaning and values can be distinguished and disassociated from the crimes it represents. It is a shift in the meaning of Agrippina's corpse which echoes the 'shift from physical touch to sight'[289] which Elizabeth Bronfen has identified as typical of Victorian literary representations of the relationship between the male possessor/viewer and the body of the female corpse as an object of erotic desire. Understood in this context, the criminality of the original act of matricide pales in comparison to the far more unsettling subtexts of necrophilia and incest which accompany Nero's aestheticism. It is a subtext that Farrar invites the reader to notice in the 'Preface' when he insists that:

> All who know thoroughly the real features of that Pagan darkness […] will see that scarcely even by the most distant allusion have I referred to some of the worst features in the life of that day. (p.viii)

Farrar relies on the unutterability of Nero's supposed crimes to heighten the severity of the insinuation, and to strengthen the suggested link between aestheticism and the perverse. Furthermore, any failure on the reader's part to reject and condemn Nero amounts to complicity or tolerance of such criminality. Just like the language of disease, the last of the Julio-Claudia emperors becomes a cipher in a hostile gender discourse which insists upon the equation of aestheticism with deviance, degeneration and the perverse. Thus Farrar's Nero, whilst he is never openly charged with crimes of incest and necrophilia in the novel, may as well, according to such hostile codifications, be guilty of both.

The culmination of Neronian comparisons and pathological models to vilify the aesthete and the decadent in fin-de-siècle culture, comes with Max Nordau's seminal work on *Degeneration* in 1891. Building on Darwinian models and theories of atavism, Nordau's work argued that, under particular conditions – most notably the rapid

[289] Bronfen, p.95.

urbanization of Europe's capital cities – and without due vigilance from society at large, western races and civilizations faced the possibility of decay and decline both of the individual and society. Nowhere is Nordau more scathing in his condemnation of decadence, presented as both a symptom and a cause of degeneration, than in his descriptions of the French decadent writer Charles Baudelaire. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the contentious issue here is the metropolis and, specifically, Nordau's outrage at Baudelaire's description of Paris as a city populated with 'useless' people, whose uselessness is rooted in their being 'wholly inaccessible to literary pleasures.'[290] He writes:

> If this simpleton had the power, he would no doubt wish to pursue his idea to the end and sweep the 'useless' out of the ranks of the living, as Nero put to death those who did not applaud his acting in the theatre. Can the monstrous ego-mania of one demented be more audaciously expressed than in this remark of Baudelaire's? (p.271)

Nordau's styling of Baudelaire as, simultaneously, a demented simpleton and a modern-day Nero, demonstrates the extent to which Roman decadence and pathology had become interwoven. That these terms can function interchangeably, but that their accepted meaning is always a pejorative one when describing masculinity, had become the default position of conservative writers hostile to aestheticism and decadence. After all, to describe a set of masculine traits or values in the language of disease is to imply abnormality and the departure, wilful or otherwise, from a 'normal' state of health and vigour. Such discourse offers no alternative model of masculinity except as a failed or perverse departure from the masculine norm. By offering a diagnosis of decadence as physical, mental and social disease, Nordau also reinforces the authority of the diagnoser of this condition. In fact, the real cause of Nordau's anger here is not so much Baudelaire's decadence and its perceived deviation from conventional notions of manliness, as his use of the term 'useless' to denigrate those same conservative ideologies. Nordau refutes the cultural authority of the

[290] Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (New York: Appleton, 1895), p.271. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

'Decadents and Esthetes' [291] to designate usefulness in fin-de-siècle culture and to challenge the meaning of the scripts and signifiers through which masculinity was constructed and inscribed. Baudelaire's statement is therefore an unauthorized utterance which must be invalidated – by means of the Neronian parallel and pathologized language – as the voice of an unsound or underdeveloped subjectivity.

What is even more interesting about Nordau's *Degeneration*, however, is that those same sanitary and Roman metaphors become increasingly literal. Later in the text, Nordau describes Baudelaire as a kind of demonic 'Master' of a host of degenerate disciples who have each inherited certain 'symptoms' of their creator's condition, including 'his predilection for disease, death and putrefaction (necrophilia)' and 'his sexual aberrations and lasciviousness.'[292] Decadence is tantamount here to a disease of the body and mind which is not a merely metaphorical condition represented by Nero, but is also a literal disease with which Nero himself, like Baudelaire and his disciples, was afflicted. The aesthete and the decadent are not merely Nero-like in their deviance, according to Nordau, but uncanny reincarnations of Nero himself. A further consequence of this more literal rendering of masculine deviance is that, as a disease both masculine and social, decadence is a contagious problem, communicable between men, not least in the densely populated spaces of the metropolis which so preoccupied late-Victorian writers on both sides of the decadence debate. The male body therefore becomes a metonym for civilization in a hostile discourse whereby the only sanctioned narrative of aestheticist and decadent masculinity is a downward trajectory, progressing inevitably from decadence, to degeneration, to death. My purpose in tracing the interconnectedness of the Neronian parallel and the language of pathology, then, has been to demonstrate that this very

[291] Nordau allocates book III:3 of *Degeneration* to discussing the titular 'Decadents and Esthetes', pp. 296-337.
[292] Nordau, p.296.

conservative narrative is, at its core, Gibbonian, charting the decline and fall not just of the individual male, but also of civilization as a whole.

4.2 Pater and the Defence of Aestheticism

Given the meaning and function of decadent Rome in the conservative discourses I have been describing, and particularly in debates about styles of masculinity in the late nineteenth century, how are we to explain the use of that same classical past by writers like Walter Pater, who deploys decadent Rome as part of a serious and sober defence of aesthetic ideology? What was there to be gained from an ostensibly contaminated parallel whereby decadent Rome – associated, as we have seen, with decline and death – was primarily used to signal the failure of conventional 'normal' manliness associated with health and growth? I want to demonstrate that, by staking a claim to the same historical parallels and networks of classical reference, Pater and his contemporaries sought to delink aestheticism from this Gibbonian narrative of decline and fall, and to reclaim aesthetic masculinity from associations of moral and masculine deviance. In *Marius the Epicurean*, for instance, Pater challenges the conventional meanings assigned to decadent Rome, establishing in their place an alternative model for contemplating aestheticism as a natural phenomenon rather than a deviant departure from moral and masculine ideals: the Aesthete himself becomes a product of the same cultural ancestry as the Victorian gentleman or the muscular Christian.

Pater's first and only novel published in his lifetime is set during the empire of the Antonines and tracks the maturation of the eponymous Marius as he studies the central tenets of a number of philosophical schools, from the rituals of the pagan religion of Numa, to new Cyrenaeism, Epicureanism and Christianity. Pater's use of what is best described as a philosophical bildungsroman structure allows for extensive meditations on

the moral and spiritual merits of each respective school but also, by extension, the particular model of manliness privileged by each. As such, the core principles of each religion or philosophy are often embodied by individual characters in the novel, and these include the Stoic Emperor Marcus Aurelius and Marius's boyhood friend Flavian. In his treatment of these characters and their interaction with the novel's protagonist, Pater differs greatly from Kingsley and Newman, whose historical novels both utilise the conversion plot as a device to figure spiritual and masculine maturity as the rewards for embracing a specifically Christian value system. In *Hypatia* and *Callista* this is usually enacted through martyrdom or the adoption of an ascetic lifestyle, both of which allow characters to perform their rejection of pagan luxury and the supposedly fundamental immorality and unmasculinity of Roman decadence. Yet Pater's novel is less interested in the protagonist's wholesale rejection or incorporation of a particular faith and its governing aesthetic, and more concerned with the cumulative and morally improving effect of exposure to many different aesthetics and ideologies upon Marius's sense of identity and morality. One aspect of these otherwise disconnected and incompatible ideologies which remains constant in Marius's mind is the beauty of the signs and rituals associated with each school. Regardless of the ethos being signified, we have a focus on the beauty of the ritual or object as a route to spiritual and moral contemplation.[293] In the opening pages of the novel, for instance, Marius must oversee the meticulously ritualised worship of a pagan festival on his family's estate and discovers that the '*conscience* of which the old Roman religion was a formal, habitual recognition, had become in him a powerful current of feeling and observance.'[294] The novel strives for a universal and unifying philosophy which can accommodate in a single masculine identity aestheticism, moral virtue, and

[293] See Adams, pp.205-211, for a detailed analysis of 'manliness in art' forming 'the type and basis of a comprehensive masculine ethos' (p.211).
[294] Walter Pater, *Marius the Epicurean*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1885), I:5. Hereafter cited parenthetically as MEi.

masculine ideality – concepts which had often been presented as incompatible according to nineteenth-century conservative discourses.

Marius can thus be read as Pater's attempt to reclaim aesthetic manliness from the conservative narratives of degeneration, decline and fall, and his use of Antonine Rome as a setting and backdrop for his protagonist's meditations is perhaps the most overt iteration of this reclamation. Marius's coming to maturity manifests, we are told 'not as the longing for love – to be with Aspasia or Cynthia' (MEi, p.169), but as a desire to look upon the city of Rome itself. 'And,' Pater writes, 'at no period of history had the material Rome itself been better worth seeing' than at this particular historical moment: 'That old pagan world, of which Rome was the flower, had reached its perfection in the things of poetry and art – a perfection which indicated only too surely the eve of decline' (MEi, p.184). The city holds a particular fascination for the young Marius, not because it is pure and as yet uncorrupted by that decay which will eventually be held up by Gibbon as the cause of its destruction, but because it is poised on the point of transition between two phases of civilization. These phases, like springtimes, must be reached by a period of decay and rebirth:

> Much which spoke of ages earlier than Nero, the great re-builder, lingered on, antique, quaint, immeasurably venerable, like the relics of the medieval city in the Paris of Lewis the Fourteenth: the work of Nero's own time had come to have that sort of old world and picturesque interest which the work of Lewis has for ourselves; while without stretching a parallel too far we might perhaps liken the architectural finesses of the archaic Hadrian to the more excellent products of our own Gothic revival. (MEi, p.185)

With characteristic collapsing of the temporal and ideological distance between the historical setting and the modern reader, Pater suggests a direct chain of aesthetic influence of one age upon the next. Victorian culture is shown here as the direct successor to pre-Neronian, Neronian, Hadrianic and Antonine Roman culture, as well as mediaeval and Bourbon France. It is a heritage that crosses national and religious divides as well as appearing to bypass the moral value judgements often attached to some of the more

decadent pasts. There is little suggestion that the decadence of any of these ages catalysed their decay, nor any attempt to link that decay thematically with moral or masculine deviance in a given age. In place of metaphorical disease as a symptom of decadence and deviance in civilization, and one which will lead to inevitable decline and fall, Pater offers an alternative model of decay as a perfectly natural and necessary aspect of progress and evolution.[295]

As with the more hostile Philistine discourses described earlier in this chapter, Paterian reconfigurations of decay as a natural, and therefore an aesthetically beautiful and potentially moral process, get inscribed on the male body. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the case of Marius's boyhood friend Flavian. We are first introduced to Flavian in the fourth chapter of the novel, which charts Marius's education at the house of a tutor in the 'pensive, partly decayed' (MEi, p.47) city of Pisa. In the competitive school environment, Flavian stands apart from the other boys as a personage of great physical beauty: 'Flavian indeed was a creature who changed much with the changes of the passing light and shade about him, and was brilliant enough under the early sunshine' (MEi, p.53). Flavian, for Marius, exists as an aesthetic object, but also as a creator of exquisitely beautiful poetry. He is a prodigy of 'Roman Euphuism, determined at any cost to attain beauty in writing' (MEi, p.104). The defining characteristic of Flavian's writing is that it is at the cutting edge of literary fashion, and in Marius's day, we are told, the fashion is for the 'refrain' (MEi, p.106). It is precisely this artistic innovation and his desire to break from 'the burden of precedent laid upon every artist' (MEi, p.107) which causes Flavian to fall foul of hostile critics resistant to the new:

> Certain elderly counsellors, filling what may be thought a constant part in the little tragi-comedy which literature and its votaries are playing in all ages, would ask, suspecting some affectation or unreality in that minute

[295] See R.K.R. Thornton, *The Decadent Dilemma* (London: Edward Arnold, 1983), pp.1-14 on nineteenth-century models for conceptualizing decline.

> culture of form:– Cannot those who have a thing to say, say it directly? Why not be simple and broad, like the old writers of Greece? (MEi, p.106)

In their condemnation of new literary forms and aesthetic tastes, as well as of the men who pioneer them as being affected and essentially effeminate in their want of frank speech, the 'elderly counsellors' resemble the self-proclaimed Philistines of Pater's own day. What the novel does is to imagine a long lineage not only for the aesthete as innovator, but also for the rejection of this figure by traditionalists whose efforts to impose cultural stasis on human civilization and culture are exposed as inherently misguided and narrow-minded. The 'elderly counsellors' of Rome and Britain alike, it is suggested, fail to recognize the necessity of embracing the new – and particularly the aesthete – as agents of progress. Thus, whilst conceding that there are instances in every age when the pursuit of aesthetic beauty 'might lapse into its characteristic fopperies or mannerisms, into the "defects of its qualities,"' (MEi, pp.104-105), Pater stresses that even the most ancient and canonical authors of the ostensibly conservative classical tradition were once pioneers of literary fashion and the new. 'Had Homer, even,' he asks, 'appeared unreal and affected in his poetic flight, to some of the people of his own age, as seemed to happen with every new literature in turn?' (MEi, p.109) Innovation becomes tradition and tradition invites innovation, and so on in every age in this Paterian model whereby change – even decay – is as natural as the cycle of the seasons and the only means of continually reinvigorating civilization and masculinity.

Pater's figuring of aestheticism as a force for progress amounts to a direct inversion of Nordau's styling of decay as a negative, virulent force resulting inevitably in degeneration of society and the metonymic male body. This would explain why Flavian's physical beauty and hyperfashionability are attributed to a 'perfectly disciplined health' (MEi, p.53), rather than any deviation from healthy 'normal' models of manliness and morality. Indeed, as part of the novel's effort to undermine what Pater presents as

inherently misguided Philistine manliness, Flavian's aestheticism is framed in the same language of physical strength and moral virtue praised by proponents of other styles of Victorian manliness:

> In him, a fine instinctive sentiment of the exact value and power of words was connate with the eager longing for sway over his fellows. He saw himself already a gallant and effective leader, innovating or conservative as occasion might require […] And he, Flavian, would prove himself the true master of the opportunity thus indicated. In his eagerness for a not too distant fame, he dreamed over all that, as the young Caesar may have dreamed of campaigns […] For words, after all, words manipulated with all his delicate force, were to be the apparatus of a war for himself. To be forcibly impressed, in the first place; and in the next, to find the means of making visible to others that which was vividly apparent, delightful, of lively interest to himself, to the exclusion of all that was but middling, tame, or only half-true even to him—this scrupulousness of literary art actually awoke in Flavian, for the first time, a sort of chivalrous conscience. (MEi, pp.101-2;104)

Flavian's literary toils demand self-discipline, skill, imagination, innovation and even patriotic feeling. His prowess in wielding words like weapons marks Flavian out as a 'true master' among his peers and aligns literary endeavour with the robust energy of the new imperialist. Equally, he is a chivalric defender of the purity of language itself, which is figured as feminine in the passage. He is framed as possessing the ideals of, simultaneously, the imperialist, the gentleman, the liberal, the conservative, and even the benevolent socialist in his love of the written word. The Aesthete, Pater suggests, is to be found among all manner of men, and his ideologies are shown to be compatible and even intrinsic to supposedly oppositional styles of Victorian masculinity.

In a further gesture of defiance towards those hostile discourses wherein, as we have seen, degeneration manifests as disease in the male body, Pater has Flavian contract the plague, and Marius must care for him as his physical health declines. Yet Flavian's illness is not the masculine disease described by Nordau or Marshall whereby decay is usually symptomatic of decadent behaviours often presented as deviant or effeminate.

Rather, Pater inverts the moral judgements implicit in fin-de-siècle uses of the medical metaphor, refashioning decay as a natural and necessary aspect of aesthetic manliness. The very prescriptive codes of dress, manner and physical fitness inherent in conservative and New Imperialist masculinities are denounced in turn as short-sighted, misguided and, ultimately morally corrupting. This inversion of meaning is emphasised by Pater's use of doubling in the novel, and especially with the contrasting of Flavian and the soldierly co-Emperor Lucius Verus, both of whom are linked with the plague. The crowning irony of Pater's plague subplot is the source of the 'terrible new disease' (MEi, p.118), which is brought to Rome not by Aesthetes, but the imperial army under Lucius Verus:

> People actually sickened at a sudden touch of the unsuspected foe, as they watched in dense crowds the pathetic or grotesque imagery of failure or success in the triumphal procession. And, as usual, the plague brought with it a power to develop all the pre-existent germs of superstition […] It seemed to have invaded the whole empire, and some have even thought that, in a mitigated form, it permanently remained there. In Rome itself many thousands perished. (MEi, pp.119-120)

The scene described above is that of the Roman Triumph, a victory procession where conquering armies would parade the spoils, captives and pictorial representations of their campaigns for the gathered crowds through the streets of the capitol. It is an occasion for celebrating and officially sanctioning the highest attainments of acquisitive imperial masculinity. Yet it is couched here in the language of revulsion. The gathering of so many bodies in celebration of what the novel suggests is an ultimately misguided and narrow-minded notion of manliness, proves destructive to the physical, moral and national health of Rome as the 'dense crowds' provide the perfect breeding conditions for the plague which is, in turn, constructed in the language of counter-invasion. It is a biological counter-invasion of the body, but has potentially catastrophic consequences for the state as well: 'The alarm of a barbarian insurrection along the whole line of the Danube had come at the moment when Rome was panic-stricken by the great pestilence' (MEi, p.190). Here we

find the conventional Gibbonian narratives of the decline and fall of Rome delinked from notions of aestheticism and decadence, and associated instead with uncompromising masculinist attitudes which are shown to be inherently self-destructive for want of a firm moral underpinning. Unlike Flavian, whose decaying body, as we shall see, belies a natural moral manliness attained through aesthetic contemplation and literary creation, the imperial aesthetic displayed at the triumph, despite projecting an outward veneer of strength and virility, is essentially 'grotesque' and unnatural. These characteristics are equally applicable to Verus himself, who is described as possessing:

> In full measure that charm of a constitutional freshness of aspect which may defy for a long time extravagant or erring habits of life; a physiognomy, healthy-looking, cleanly, and firm, which seemed unassociable with any form of self-torment […] [His] charm was that of the blond head, the unshrinking gaze, the warm tints: neither more nor less than one may see every English summer, in youth, manly enough, and with the stuff which makes brave soldiers, in spite of the natural kinship it seems to have with playthings and gay flowers. But innate in Lucius Verus there was that more than womanly fondness for fond things, which had made the atmosphere of the old city of Antioch, heavy with centuries of voluptuousness, a poison to him: he had come to love his delicacies best out of season, and would have gilded the very flowers […] though Verus had certainly not returned a conqueror over himself. He had returned, as we know, with the plague in his company'. (MEi, pp.208-209)

Verus's 'blond head' and soldierly demeanour seem to establish him as a Roman Alexander, 'skilled in manly exercise and fitted for war' (MEi, p.207) after the fashion of the heroic nude of classical sculpture. He appears to embody the favourite New Imperialist adage of *mens sana in corpore sano* (a healthy mind in a healthy body) and function as a fitting counterpart to his co-Emperor Marcus Aurelius, whose cerebral philosophizing often alienates his citizens. Yet Verus's beauty is not underwritten by any credible moral strength, and thus it is entirely artificial, ephemeral and unnatural. This mere veneer of manliness is hinted at with the image of Verus gilding the flowers and pursuing hedonistic tastes 'out of season', rather than deriving pleasure from an appreciation of natural beauty. Furthermore, Pater inverts the pathologized language of Philistine condemnations of the

Aesthete to mount a counter attack on what is presented here as an affected, hypocritical style of imperial manliness. With the natural passing of time Verus's beauty will be exposed as 'voluptuous' to the point of 'womanishness', and 'poisonous' to the point of 'plague'. Pater therefore uses Verus, with his affectation and love of artificial pleasures to imply an equally unnatural quality in New Imperialist manliness and the gender ideals it imposes. Nowhere is this more scathingly foregrounded in the novel than in the ironically-entitled chapter 'Manly Amusements', which deals first with Verus's wedding to Aurelius's daughter, Lucilla, and secondly with the games and wild beast hunts which are his favourite pastime. Sexual and military prowess are unsettlingly conflated under the title of 'manly amusement', and both are rejected as markers of true manliness. After all, Verus's marriage has been arranged so that he might have 'the credit of a [romantic] "Conquest"' (MEi, p.209), whilst the games highlight the extent to which imperialist praise of physical strength and combat reduces men to the condition of animals. Far from a true representation of heroism in the novel, the games showcase only destruction and a complete lack of imagination or aesthetic appreciation on the part of the audience:

> Mere cruelty to animals, their useless suffering and death, formed the main point of interest. People watched their destruction, batch after batch, in a not particularly inventive fashion; though it was expected that the animals themselves, as living creatures are apt to do when hard put to it, would become inventive, and make up, by the fantastic accidents of their agony, for the deficiencies of an age fallen behind in this matter of manly amusement. (p.255)

Interestingly, 'their destruction' in this passage could apply just as fittingly to the animals or the humans. The former interpretation would produce a reading of the imperial male as a cruel destroyer of life and nature; the latter of that same male as a senseless seeker of animal pleasures and a brute bent on the destruction of himself and his species. Here then, Pater suggests, is true degeneration and de-volution of the human race, and it is catalysed by the misguided privileging of bodily strength as the basis of masculine virtue, without

stressing the need for an accompanying aesthetic morality. Heroism, according to such models, is temporary, foppish and associated only with domination and destruction.

Truly heroic manliness is instead assigned to Flavian, as Pater reworks conventional descriptors of physical strength and military combat into metaphors for Flavian's more literary labours. In his sick bed, for instance, 'Flavian [lies] there with the enemy at his breast' (MEi, p.120) and is described as 'doing battle with his enemy' (MEi, p.125) as he fights to live long enough to dictate to Marius his magnum opus in the face of imminent death. The result of his labours is a kind of literary apotheosis whereby the masculine qualities that conservative commentators of the fin de siècle locate in the physical body get relocated and reinscribed as text, becoming a much more permanent monument to aesthetic ideology and masculinity. Thus, we are told, 'Marius noticed there, amid all its richness of expression and imagery, that firmness of outline he had always relished so much in the composition of Flavian' (MEi, p.123). In terms of the thematic content of Flavian's work, what he produces is:

> A kind of nuptial hymn which, taking its start from the thought of nature as the universal mother, celebrated the preliminary pairing and mating together of all fresh things, in the hot and genial spring-time. (MEi, p.121)

Recurring allusions to natural reproductive processes suggest that Flavian's heroism is not, as in classical epic, a military act of destruction and killing, but an act of literary creation, preoccupied with natural processes of growth and rebirth. Moreover, literary creation is the result of a process of decay, since it is the plague which proves to be the catalyst for Flavian's heroic efforts. Pater is harnessing the conventionally positive associations of birth and growth in western culture, but in place of what he suggests to be an unnaturally reductive binary opposition promulgated by conservative commentators – namely the binary of positive health and growth vs. negative decay and degeneration – he substitutes a

cyclical model of perpetual decay and rebirth whereby decay is: firstly, an entirely natural phenomenon, as necessary for the growth of civilizations as winter is for rebirth in the natural world and, secondly, free from associations of moral or masculine deviance.

The importance of the cyclical model for aesthetic conceptualizations of masculinity is echoed in the structure of the novel as a whole, which is bookended by episodes set in Marius's ancestral home – 'an old country-house, half farm, half villa' (MEi, p.5). In the opening chapters, Marius is a child much attached to his mother and only beginning to develop – through careful observance of religious ritual, the arts, and the workings of the natural world – a philosophy of aesthetic morality and masculinity which will develop throughout the novel. By the penultimate chapter, an older and more learned Marius, facing the prospect of imminent death, returns to the house and finds there a decaying homestead with 'an odd air of neglect'.[296] Marius feels instant 'remorse' (MEii, p.226) at having been absent so long as to have allowed this decay of the country house to become degenerative and associated with death. He is troubled most of all by the crumbling beams, one of which has 'fallen and chipped open one of the oldest of the mortuary urns' (MEii, p.226), disturbing the bones of a child of the household from many generations before. While Marius has the bones reburied as recompense for his neglect, he is also motivated by an increasingly resigned fascination with his own death. During the funeral rites, however, he notices with surprise the inscription on the tomb of his late father. For Marius:

> That hard feeling, again, which had always lingered in his mind with the thought of the father he had scarcely known, melted wholly away, as he read the precise number of his years, and reflected suddenly – He was of my own age now; no hard old man, but with interests, as he looked round him on the world for the last time, even as mine to-day! (MEii, p.227)

[296] Walter Pater, *Marius the Epicurean*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1885), II:226. Hereafter cited parenthetically as MEii.

Marius's sense of identification and affinity with the father about whom he had little understanding in the early chapters of the novel, serves as a marker of his philosophical and moral growth during his absence from the family home, as well as the development of a mature masculine identity. Furthermore, as a consequence of this new awareness of his father as an individual, Marius begins to think of himself in a paternal, rather than a filial role, particularly in his relationship with his friend Cornelius:

> 'More than brother!' – he felt – 'like a son also!' […] A new hope had sprung up in the world of which he, Cornelius, was a depositary, which he was to bear onward in it. Identifying himself with Cornelius in so dear a friendship, through him, Marius seemed to touch, to ally himself to, actually to become a possessor of the coming world; even as happy parents reach out, and take possession of it, in and through the survival of their children. (MEii, pp.230-231)

Thus, whilst Marius's death retains its sense of tragic finality for himself as an individual – his personal narrative is linear and the episodes at the farm are bookends to it – he also recognises that his death will mark a fresh cycle in a much larger, and possibly a universal narrative of moral, aesthetic manliness.

Pater succeeds in altering the meaning of death, and particularly death by disease, in *Marius*, removing it from conservative narratives of 'decline and fall' and establishing instead a hermeneutic of natural evolution wherein the Aesthete becomes an agent of progress. Even as a young man, Marius gains a brief glimpse into the evolutionary power of embracing the new when he reads Flavian's hyper-fashionable, decadent writing:

> In the expression of all this Flavian seemed, while making it his chief aim to retain the opulent, many-syllabled vocabulary of the Latin genius, at some points even to have advanced beyond it, in anticipation of wholly new laws of taste as regards sound, a new range of sound itself […] [It] was to Marius like the foretaste of an entirely novel world of poetic beauty to come. Flavian had caught, indeed, something of the rhyming cadence, the sonorous organ-music of the medieval Latin, and therewithal something of its unction and mysticity of spirit. There was in his work,

> along with the last splendour of the classical language, a touch, almost prophetic, of that transformed life it was to have in the rhyming middle age, just about to dawn. (MEi, p.122)

Far from the degeneration and decline of civilization, Flavian's writing is positioned in the transitional space between the past and the future. Indeed it is Flavian's willingness to embrace the new as a source of possibility and progress that Pater identifies as the catalyst for progress. The Victorian reader, possessed of a knowledge of the classical tradition, is invited to understand what to Marius in the Antonine period seems like a prophetic concept: that Flavian has, in his moment of bodily decay, created Mediaeval Latin. This new incarnation of the Latin language would of course become the language of Christian liturgy and scholarship in the middle ages of Europe, and the chief means by which conservative knowledge and notions of morality had been mediated in the centuries leading up to the Victorian age. The aesthete is set up as the unacknowledged ancestor, rather than the enemy, of the Philistine critics of the fin de siècle. Conservative models of manliness, according to this model, are therefore derived from and dependent upon a notion of the new as a force of possibility and progress, rather than of degeneration and decline. Pater is using the decadent Roman setting in *Marius* not just as space for exploring fin-de-siècle concerns but, also, as James Eli Adams has noted, for 'constructing an implicit genealogy of his own aestheticism'[297] as a foundational, rather than an oppositional principle of ideal Victorian manliness. The Gentleman, the New Imperialist and the Muscular Christian all owe aspects of their identity and ideologies to advocates of the 'new', of the sort whom – in their own day – they would roundly condemn as effeminate or degenerate.

Pater's insistence upon the interconnectedness of aestheticism, morality and masculine ideality seems at odds with the ethos of the toga play, where ancient Rome is often depicted as the natural enemy of moral, Christian manliness. Yet, what would seem a simple opposition of vulgar Roman decadence and lofty Christian virtue in the toga play is

[297] Adams, pp. 186-187.

complicated by the use of aesthetic spectacle intended to strengthen the impact of the plays' religio-moral message, and to broaden the appeal of the productions themselves. Increasingly close collaboration between the worlds of theatre, art, and academia at this time ensured that the classical past formed a progressively more prominent part of the late-Victorian imagination, but it also meant that the overtly moralistic content of the toga play was codified in increasingly aestheticist terms. As Newey and Richards have noted: 'The late Victorian vogue for toga plays coincided with the classical revival in painting which lasted from the 1860s to 1914'[298] and, which saw 'Olympian' painters like Leighton, Alma-Tadema and Burne Jones being commissioned as scene-painters and artistic consultants on productions. Equally, we find scholars like Sir Charles Newton, who was keeper of classical antiquities at the British Museum, being asked to consult on the historical accuracy of classical drama and painting.[299] A particularly useful example of this kind of cross-pollination of expertise can be found with E.W. Godwin's production of *Helena in Troas* (1886) which was staged for the benefit of the British School of Archaeology in Rome. The playwright, John Todhunter, was also the author of a treatise on aesthetics entitled *A Theory of the Beautiful* (1872), whilst Godwin himself had publicly renounced the more Ruskinian brand of aesthetics in 1864 and subscribed to the founding tenets of the Aesthetic movement.[300] The production was intended as an aesthetic spectacle, with costuming and tableau vivants overseen by Louise Jopling and the staging designed to mimic the ancient theatre space, with tiered seating and imitation marble floors.[301] The audience of the toga drama – which included among its number on the opening night of *Helena*, the Prince and Princess of Wales, Lawrence Alma-Tadema and Oscar Wilde – were therefore exposed to, but also implicated in, a metatheatrical

[298] Katherine Newey and Jeffrey Richards, *John Ruskin and the Victorian Theatre* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p.85. See also Jenkyns, pp.298-330 for more on classical art and the Victorian theatre.
[299] See Newey and Richards, pp.88-89; Christopher Wood, *Olympian Dreamers: Victorian Classical Painters 1860-1914* (London: Constable, 1983), p.30.
[300] Newey and Richards, pp.46; 90-91.
[301] See Jenkyns, pp.303-306; Newey and Richards, 90-91.

performance of classics as aesthetic spectacle. Even the most moralistic and pious examples of toga plots are inadvertently conflating Christian morality and masculine ideality with the very aestheticism that Pater identified in the decadent Roman world, and which he attempted to decriminalize and delink from associations of degeneration and deviance. At the very least, the fashionability of the toga play among groups as diverse as Evangelical Christians, the Royal family and key members of the decadence movement, is a phenomenon both driven by and driving the familiarization and normalization of a late-Victorian discourse in which aestheticism, morality and styles of masculine ideality are inextricably intertwined.

This Paterian notion of aestheticism as the basis for a morally acceptable standard of manliness gains traction in the closing decades of the century, largely as part of a growing dissatisfaction with Gibbon as the chief authority on decadent Rome and the causes of her decline. We have seen already the Philistine condemnation of the Aesthete and the Decadent which Gibbon had helped to crystallize when he attributed the fall of Rome to a failing of civic and martial virtue among her male citizens. Indeed, many conservative writers persisted in their use of Gibbon as a basis for condemning aestheticism as inherently unmasculine until the end of the century, and often with a kind of millenarian pessimism. An 1899 article entitled 'From the New Gibbon', and published in *Blackwood's* as part of the 1000th issue of the periodical, mimics Gibbon's style to lament the reduction of Britain's empire in precisely these terms. As we might expect, the decline of empire is attributed to fin-de-siècle 'parasites of fashion'[302] and the degenerate male body is used throughout as a metonym for the decline of society as a whole:

> The British Empire entered upon the twentieth century under the gloomiest of auspices […] The fair city still stood, but *men* were wanting within it […] Civilization had completed its work in the suppression of the

[302] [Anon.], 'From the New Gibbon', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine,* 165 (February 1899), pp.241-249 (p.242).

> individual, and the British, the most virile of barbarians, the most forward and energetic of mankind, were dissipated by their very virtues as the first to experience the dire results of its consummation. The diminutive stature of mankind was daily sinking below the old standard; Britain was indeed peopled by a race of pygmies, and the puny breed awaited only the onset of the first crisis to become the woeful patient of defeat and ruin.[303]

Early in the piece, the 'New Gibbon', with his imagined hindsight on the late nineteenth century, insists that 'The student of that age will find melancholy evidence of degeneration in the printed records, and especially in the newspapers, of the time.'[304] However, examination of precisely this kind of material from contemporary periodical sources reveals that, whilst Gibbon was by no means dethroned from his perceived place as 'The Greatest Modern Historian,'[305] there was a growing contingent of writers who highlighted Gibbon's out-dated methods, problematized his treatment of the Roman past, and resisted models of decadence and degeneration derived therefrom.

In a letter to the editors of the *National Review* in August 1892, for instance, Herbert Haines criticises the tendency of historians to overstate the importance of Gibbon for young men 'endeavouring to understand the fall of the Roman Empire.'[306] Haines takes particular issue with Edward Gibbs's 'Ancient Rome and Modern London' for its assessment that 'Practically Gibbon's work is the only acknowledged authority in our public schools and universities'[307], insisting instead that 'All students of history respect Gibbon; but no student would accept him as a sole authority.'[308] Haines goes on to prescribe a number of alternative accounts by modern historians and even novelists which complicate and offer slightly different contexts for Gibbon's narrative of imperial decline.

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[303] [Anon.], 'From the New Gibbon', p.249.
[304] [Anon.], 'From the New Gibbon', p.242.
[305] See [Anon.], 'Who is the Greatest Modern Historian?', *Review of Reviews,* 40 (July 1909), p.56.
[306] Herbert Haines, 'Ancient Rome and Modern London', *National Review,* 19 (August 1892), p.867.
[307] Cited from Gibbs, p.516.
[308] Haines, p.867.

Even J.B. Bury, who edited the 1900 edition of Gibbon's history had to concede that: 'The discovery of new materials, the researches of numerous scholars, in the course of a hundred years, have not only added to our knowledge of facts, but have modified and upset conclusions which Gibbon, with his materials, was justified in drawing.'[309] No doubt one of the scholars that Bury had in mind was Niebuhr, who had previously, as George Henry Lewes describes, 'changed the whole aspect of Roman history by simply discriminating its mythological elements.'[310] In so doing, Niebuhr's *Roman History* highlighted issues of reliability and transmission inherent in even the most well-known and widely read classical authors, and paved the way for much more scientific and evidence-based approaches to history. Furthermore, the professionalization of disciplines like archaeology, anthropology and the sciences in the mid-nineteenth century led to what, for Lewes in 1863, was a long-overdue shift in focus for scholarship on ancient Rome. Lewes writes:

> Historians have been especially remarkable for throwing all their ingenuity into the construction of inferences and the accumulation of probabilities, instead of first carefully ascertaining whether the 'facts' themselves were not worthless […] The picture [Roman historians] have painted of the empire is so remarkable an example of the unreflecting credulity with which history is mostly written.[311]

Simply to accept the accounts and conclusions of a single historian – whether ancient or modern – without rigorous examination of their reliability, is here a sign of an 'unreflecting' mind, impulsive, illogical and wanting in capacity for critical thought. This kind of scientific interrogation of source material to determine not only *what* is known about the Roman past, but also *how* it has come to be accepted as historical truth, would have two-fold consequences for aesthetic notions of masculinity in the period. Firstly, dissatisfaction with outmoded approaches to history as a discipline afforded Pater and his

[309] J. Bury, *Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1900), cited in [Anon.], 'New Books Received', *Academy*, (12 May 1900), p.415.
[310] George Henry Lewes, 'Was Nero a Monster?', *Cornhill Magazine*, 8 (July 1863), pp.113-128 (p.113).
[311] Lewes, p.114.

peers a legitimate entry point into more conservative discourses, from which to begin delinking 'decline and fall' from notions of moral or masculine deviance, and from which to challenge fin-de-siècle theories of degeneration into which Gibbonian models had been appropriated. Secondly, understood as an exercise in rational, evidence-based reception, 'manliness' begins to imply an ability – or rather a mandate – to revisit and reinterpret conventional understandings of the past in light of empirical evidence, or lack thereof. Periods and personages long dismissed as decadent or degenerate on the testimony of writers both ancient and modern, seemed increasingly to require reinterpretation; the treatment of both Rome and aestheticist manliness in Pater's *Marius* can be understood as the culmination of both of these forces. Nowhere, however, was the mandate for revisionist interpretations of Rome more gleefully embraced than by writers of the Decadence movement in Britain. In the characteristically controversial and self-parodic style of the movement, these writers looked to the most notorious of 'bad' emperors and decadent pasts to champion a new kind of fin-de-siècle manliness, which rejected abstract notions of virtue and morality in favour of a new standard of man as artist.

4.3 Decadence

Pater had sought to demonstrate with *Marius* that one could be both an aesthete and a Victorian gentleman in the conventional sense. His ideology was ultimately one of reconciliation because the aesthete was, in his formulation, a descendant of various styles of nineteenth-century manliness. The aesthete and the gentleman could be accommodated in one body and one identity. By contrast, the decadents of the late-nineteenth century rejected such an accommodation, stressing instead the artificiality of conventional styles of manliness. For decadent writers like Wilde, the gentleman, the clergyman, the industrialist and the imperialist – despite their vehement rejection of purportedly unmanly affectation – were roles to be performed through a series of conventions of speech, dress and manner, no

less so than that of the dandy. In this way, decadent gender constructs mirror the larger ideologies of the movement as a whole, outlined here by Dennis Denisoff:

> While major nineteenth-century aesthetic movements like Naturalism and Realism tried to hide their own fabrications in order to create the illusion of being reality, decadence is more honest because it emphasises the artificiality inherent in any act of representation […] [A]rt and literature produced as part of the Decadent movement refuse to allow society to pretend that it can know one objective reality or that progress to any sustainable ideal is even manageable.[312]

In place of other styles of masculinity which position the ideal male as the representative of a particular set of social values and moral 'truths', decadence privileges a more performative model of man as artist. The decadent himself becomes both artist and art object in this formulation of masculinity.

Though they remained uninterested in the kind of reconciliatory approach that Pater was advocating when he suggested a shared ancestry for the aesthete and other models of Victorian manliness, the decadents found other ancestors and traced an alternative lineage going back through the most ostensibly decadent ages of western history and the arts. As Wilde writes in *Dorian Gray*: 'one had ancestors in literature as well as in one's own race, nearer perhaps in type and temperament' (*DG,* p.215). This statement is followed immediately in the novel by Dorian's reflections on the 'wonderful novel that had so influenced his life' (*DG,* p.215), and in which the unnamed protagonist:

> sat as Tiberius in a garden at Capri […] as Caligula, had caroused with the green-shirted jockeys in their stables […] as Domitian had wandered through a corridor lined with marble mirrors…and then, in a litter of pearl and purple drawn by silver-shod mules, been carried through the Street of Pomegranates to a House of Gold, and heard men cry on Nero Caesar as he passed by. (*DG,* p.215)

[312] Dennis Denisoff, 'Decadence and Aestheticism', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle,* ed. by Gail Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp.31-51 (p.33).

The protagonist of this novel (which has often been identified as Huysmans's *À Rebours*) as well as the list of 'bad' Roman emperors blur together in Dorian's own persona: 'He felt that he had known them all…that in some mysterious way their lives had been his own' (*DG*, p.215). Thus, although Jean Pierrot in his study on *The Decadent Imagination* (1981) accounts for the decadent fascination with Rome as part of a 'contempt [for] contemporary reality' that led writers 'to turn their gaze backward toward certain favoured and prestigious past eras,'[313] nostalgia for the exotic aesthetic of remote ages or escapism from what they felt to be a disappointing present is only part of the story. After all, the episode from *Dorian Gray* is ultimately staging the collapse of temporal and ideological distance between the fin-de-siècle dandy and his Roman 'ancestors'. The recurring fantasy of the decadent male in literature of the 1890s is, as Dorian himself expresses, 'to become to the London of his own day what to imperial Neronian Rome the author of the 'Satyricon' had once been' (*DG*, p.193). I suggest, then, that decadent Rome held a particular fascination for nineteenth-century decadents partly because of its infamy in the western historical tradition, which appealed to the controversial and self-parodic tone of the movement as a whole, but also because it functioned as a locus for so many other decadent preoccupations with morality, criminality and the effects of time upon the male body. By laying claim to the same cultural spaces that philistines and imperialists were using to signify failed manliness, decadent writers were able to not only be playfully antagonistic towards their detractors, but also to articulate a positive model of how the aforementioned preoccupations might co-exist and cohere as part of a new decadent formulation of man as artist. In this context, the emperor Nero and his legend constitute a genuine, albeit deliberately controversial ideal of decadent manliness. Nero's legacy might traditionally have been one of criminality, murder, and the persecution of Christians, but the emperor was also a poet, a composer, and an actor, famously lamenting

[313] Jean Pierrot, *The Decadent Imagination, 1880-1900*, trans. by Derek Coltman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p.10.

with his last breath 'what an artist dies in me!' ('Qualis artifex pereo'). [314] Nero represented a choice of art over empire, and over conventional understandings of morality and religion which underpin other styles of Victorian manliness.[315] It was a choice which the decadents aspired to and sought to reaffirm in their own works.

British decadents inherited the question of how to integrate elements of sensation, aesthetics and artistry into a stable masculine identity, as well as the Neronian rendering of such masculinities, from French pioneers of the movement. Théophile Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1835), for instance, which is best known for its preface in which Gautier expounds his theory that 'everything that is useful is ugly,'[316] tracks the protagonist d'Albert in his pursuit of ideal beauty. The Roman emperors represent for d'Albert a fantasy of an existence whereby aesthetic pleasure could be pursued outwith nineteenth-century economic and social conventions, and outside conventional Judaeo-Christian moral structures.

> Tiberius, Caligula, Nero, great Romans of the Empire, who have been so misunderstood, pursued by the baying rabble of rhetors, I am suffering from your malady and I pity you from the bottom of my heart. I too should like to bridge the sea and pave the waters. I have dreamed of setting towns on fire to light up my feasts. I have wished to be a woman in order to experience new sensual pleasures. Your golden palace, Nero, is but a muddy stable next to the palace I have erected.[317]

The fantasy is often inextricably linked with gender identity, since d'Albert's wish to be a woman, like his dream of burning towns, is a reference to Nero, and specifically to the mock wedding ceremony described by Suetonius in which the emperor played the role of

[314] For more on Nero's legacy as an artist, see especially: Martin Dinter, 'The Neronian (Literary) Renaissance', in *A Companion to the Neronian Age*, ed. by Emma Buckley and Martin Dinter (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp. 1-14; Miriam Griffin, 'Nachtwort: Nero From Zero to Hero', in *A Companion to the Neronian Age*, pp.468-480.
[315] See Regenia Gagnier, *Idylls of the Marketplace: Oscar Wilde and the Victorian Public* (Aldershot: Scolar, 1987) for more on the decadent 'break with Victorian domestic and imperial ideology' (p.6), and the manifestations of this in fin-de-siècle codifications of the dandy and the gentleman.
[316] Théophile Gautier, *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, trans. by Helen Constantine (London: Penguin, 2005), p.23.
[317] Gautier, pp.127-128.

the bride.[318] This classical reference also foreshadows the central turning point of the plot. Immediately after d'Albert's account of his disillusionment, he encounters the ideal of beauty he has been searching for not, he believes, in a woman, but in the form of the young man Theodor: 'So here, then, at long last, is one of those types of beauty I was dreaming of actually walking in front of me! What a shame he's a man, or what a shame I am not a woman'.[319] Although the young man will eventually be revealed as the eponymous Mlle. de Maupin, the ostensibly fluid state of gender and sexuality in the novel, and in decadent writing more broadly, is simultaneously flouting conventional notions of bourgeois respectability and morality, as well as setting forth a genuine reconfiguration of manliness based on an individual's appreciation and embodiment of the decadent principle of 'l'art pour l'art'.

As well as drawing on the Roman past to articulate ideas of art 'for its own sake', French decadent and symbolist writers used Nero as a locus for related ideas about the a-morality of art, man as artist, and the effects of time and criminality upon masculine identity. Published in 1883, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's story 'The Desire To Be a Man' captures this matrix of preoccupations and the way in which they manifest in the decadent imagination as a fantasy of distinctly Neronian identity. The story begins with the protagonist, Chaudval, suffering a crisis of identity when confronted with the sight of his ageing body in a public mirror, and with the prospect of retired life away from the stage. Chaudval is introduced as 'a tall personage with Saturnine physiognomy […] a sleepwalker's gait, sporting long, greying locks beneath a Louis XIII-style felt hat […] and wrapped in an old royal-blue greatcoat edged with rather moth-eaten astrakhan fur.'[320] In his physical appearance, Chaudval is a faded and decayed version of the kind of costumed

[318] Suetonius, 'Nero', 28, in *The Twelve Caesars*, p.228.
[319] Gautier, p.130.
[320] Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, 'The Desire To Be a Man', in *French Decadent Tales*, trans. by Stephen Romer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 36-44 (p.37). Hereafter cited parenthetically as 'DTBM'.

personalities to be found nearby in 'theatres along the Boulevard du Crime, where, during the evening, whole gangs of Medici, Salviati, and Montefeltre had stabbed each other to their heart's content' ('DTBM', p.37). His dress, neither everyday wear nor fully costume, indicates Chaudval's existence in a precarious liminal space between life and art. It is an instability of masculine identity that l'Isle-Adam reinforces by repeatedly referring to his protagonist as 'the celebrated tragedian Espirit Chaudval, born Lepeinteur, known as Monteuil' (pp.37;40). Facing the end of his career, Chaudval's identity, and even his name, become increasingly unstable as he conceives of the titular 'desire to be a man' as a desire to reintegrate into 'real' life and to forge a subjectivity based on genuine emotional experience rather than performed feelings:

> For nearly half a century I have *acted*, I have *played* the passions of other people without ever feeling them – in fact I have never felt anything, myself […] So does that make me nothing but a *shadow*? Passions! Feelings! Real Actions! REAL! They are the things that make up a MAN! Now that age is forcing me to rejoin the human race, I owe it to myself to take possession of the passions, or at least of some *real* feeling […] because that is the *sine qua non* for anyone pretending to the title Man. (p.40)

However, it quickly becomes apparent that Chaudval can perceive the world, and his own place in it, only according to the conventions of the theatrical world which has been at the heart of his own identity for almost fifty years. When Chaudval settles on 'REMORSE!' (p.40) as the emotion which will mark his transformation into a man, for instance, it is a choice informed by his assessment that 'that's what my dramatic temper needs' (p.40); he must, it seems, conceptualize his predicament as a theatrical trope and himself as a tragic hero after the fashion of 'Nero! Macbeth! Orestes! Hamlet! Erostratus!' (p.40). Chaudval's increasingly fragmented speech at this point in the narrative is also reminiscent of the soliloquys of the classical and Shakespearean heroes he emulates, and is interrupted only by what amount to stage directions in the text, as Chaudval cries aloud, strikes his forehead

or even halts for ‘a further pause’ (p.41) As he decides on how to induce feelings of remorse, he ‘start[s] to speak in dialogue’ (p.41) and the conclusion he arrives as it distinctly Neronian both in its spirit and its practical details

> If I am to feel remorse, I must commit the crime to go with it! Well so be it, I’ll go with crime: what difference does it make, so long as I commit it […] with the right intention? [...] Something to bring all the Furies forth from hell! – What, then? – The most dazzling, of course […] Bravo! I have it! FIRE! (p.41)

In his choice of crime and fire as potential pathways to the misguided ideal of ‘real’ manliness, Chaudval emulates Nero, whose legend is not only one of a notorious criminal, but also of an artist and performer. What Chaudval achieves, then, is not ‘true’ remorse and integration into ‘real’ life, but a reabsorption into the theatrical world and a performative identity. As a new Nero, Chaudval is able not only to bypass the criminal implications of his actions in his own mind; he can also enact a resistance or avoidance of two other decadent anxieties. Firstly, by staging his ‘wish to be a man’ as a tragedy, Chaudval counters the loss of performative identity which arose from his retirement from the stage. He even reads newspaper reports of the crime after the event as if they were theatre reviews, congratulating himself on its ‘huge success! What a wonderful villain I am! [...] I was sure that I would become a man!’ (p.43). Secondly, the dramatization of his own self as a tragic hero affords Chaudval an artistic context in which to locate the physical decline of his ageing body. Having smashed the public mirror which was the original catalyst for his crisis of selfhood, Chaudval, after the fire, retires to a remote lighthouse, taking nothing but ‘bedding, victuals, and a tall mirror with which to study the effects of all this on his physiognomy’ (p.43). Instead of a falling away of his dramatic, decadent identity, Chaudval’s ageing body becomes evidence of the remorse which he misguidedly thinks will render him a real man, but which instead reaffirms decadent notions of manliness as inherently performative.

In setting the blaze, Chaudval aspires to bring about a situation where life imitates art – in this case the history and tragedies of Nero – rather than art imitating life. The story is an example of decadent logic *ad absurdum*, for if crime is merely the breaking of those social and moral codes which the decadents rejected as artificial constructs, and if art itself is essentially a-moral, then crime, by extension, can be art and a worthwhile subject matter in decadent literature. Certainly this holds true for two of Wilde's most famous protagonists. Dorian Gray and Salomé are both murderers, yet their aesthetic validity lies in their ornate and heavily stylized rendering of criminal activity in prose, drama, visual art and even, in the case of *Salomé*, music and scent.

Thus the illicit or controversial associations of the decadent Roman past underpinned the appeal of Rome for British decadent writers. The decadents insisted on the fundamental a-morality of art and scoffed at the puritanical or Philistine anxiety which had attributed decay and decline to moral failings in men and society at large. As Wilde noted in 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism':

> Art is Individualist, and Individualism is a disturbing and disintegrating force […] There is not a single real poet or prose-writer of this century, for instance, on whom the British public have not solemnly conferred diplomas of immorality.[321]

In their celebration of traditionally illicit or disturbing pasts, the decadents were being deliberately shocking and antagonistic in their contravening of conventional bourgeois morality and masculinity. The attitudes of George Moore's narrator, Dayne, in *Confessions of a Young Man* (1886) are an extreme expression of this same ethos, and must have seemed even more troubling for Victorian notions of masculinity. Expounding on the irrelevance of injustice or crime in the production of art, Dayne, in characteristically self-parodic fashion, claims:

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[321] Oscar Wilde, 'The Soul of a Man Under Socialism', in *The Collins Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, 5th ed. (Glasgow: Harper Collins, 2003), pp.1079-1104 (p.1091).

> What care I that some millions of wretched Israelites died under Pharaoh's lash or Egypt's sun? It was well that they died that I might have the pyramids to look on, or to fill a musing hour with wonderment […] Nay more, the knowledge that a wrong was done – that millions of Israelites died in torments […] is an added pleasure which I could not afford to spare. Oh, for the silence of marble courts, for the shadow of great pillars, for gold, for reticulated canopies of lilies; to see the great gladiators pass, to hear them cry the famous 'Ave Caesar', to hold the thumb down, to see the blood flow, to fill the languid hours with the agonies of poisoned slaves! Oh, for excess, for crime![322]

Such decadent uses of Rome, and their celebration of man as an artist removed from conventional notions of morality, is a far cry from the Rome of the toga play and from Ruskinian understandings of the artist as educator and moral instructor. Indeed it is in response to the tireless moralizing of the toga genre that we find some of the most interesting reconfigurations of traditional Victorian manliness. George Bernard Shaw, though not himself a decadent, was particularly scathing of the puritanical heroes and heroines of toga drama. His play *Androcles and the Lion* (1912) is a parody of Barrett's *The Sign of the Cross*, which he later blasted as drawing 'a terrible contrast between the Romans…with their straight-forward sensuality, with the strange perverted voluptuousness of the Christians, with their shuddering exultations of longing for the whip, the rack, the stake and the lions.' He goes on to quip of the 'tremendous moral lesson…' offered by the toga play proper, that 'I am pagan enough to dislike it most intensely.'[323] Oscar Wilde's response to E.W. Godwin's 1883 production of *Claudian* is equally fascinating and foreshadows models of decadent manliness as performative, and ultimately a-moral, that we find in Wilde's best-known works.

Claudian is the story of a young Byzantine nobleman and opens in the year AD360, when Byzantium was the new capital of the Roman Empire. In the prologue of the play, Claudian is cursed by a priest to eternal youth and a life without love after he attempts to

[322] George Moore, *Confessions of a Young Man* (London: William Heinemann, 1952), p.94.
[323] George Bernard Shaw, *Our Theatres in the Nineties*, 2 vols. (London: Constable, 1948), II:12-13.

rape a married Christian woman. The events of the play proper take place more than a century later, when Claudian learns morality and selfless love, sacrificing himself for love of the young woman Almida. Despite his well-documented distaste for tragedy, John Ruskin saw the play three times, heaping praise upon Barrett himself, whose choice of leading toga roles was fast cementing his reputation as 'the epitome of Victorian masculinity and virility'.[324] For Ruskin, the aesthetic beauty of the production was deployed in service of the play's central moral message, encapsulated by Claudian's final rejection of Roman decadence in favour of a Christian ethos of love and self-sacrifice. Wilde, however, makes no mention of morality in his praise of the play's 'marvellous loveliness'.[325] Instead he praises Godwin's production as a masterpiece of decadent accomplishment. In 'The Decay of Lying' (1891) Wilde had lamented that 'The ancient historians gave us delightful fiction in the form of fact; the modern novelist presents us with dull facts under the guise of fiction.'[326] *Claudian,* then, is an antidote to both of these problems because:

> While the costumes were true to the smallest points of colour and design, yet the details were not assigned that abnormal importance which they must necessarily be given in a piecemeal lecture, but were subordinated to the rules of lofty composition and the unity of artistic effect.[327]

The toga play exemplified a decadent dream of life perfected and beautified as art: it allowed one to feel as if one were witnessing life in the ancient world, accurately portrayed in historical detail, but aesthetically perfected by being presented as theatre. It is an accomplishment that Wilde also identifies in Godwin's staging of the title character himself when he describes Claudian as being:

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[324] Newey and Richards, p.104.
[325] Oscar Wilde, 'The Truth of Masks', in *Collins Complete Works of Oscar Wilde,* pp.1060-1078 (p.1067).
[326] Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying', in *Collins Complete Works of Oscar Wilde,* pp.970-992 (p.972).
[327] Wilde, 'The Truth of Masks', p.1067.

> Not merely perfect in his picturesqueness, but absolutely dramatic also, getting rid of any necessity for tedious descriptions, and showing us by the colour and character of Claudian's dress, and the dress of his attendants, the whole nature and life of the man, from what school of philosophy he affected, down to what horses he backed on the turf.[328]

This passage from Wilde seems to confirm Newey and Richards' assessment that, for the aesthetes and the decadents of the fin de siècle, at least, the toga play was 'a revelation,'[329] and especially for decadent notions of masculine identity. After all, what Wilde applauds in the above passage about *Claudian* is the successful metatheatrical portrayal of a dandiacal ideal – manliness as a finely-crafted performance in which identity is constructed through speech, costume and gesture. It is perhaps unsurprising in this context that Wilde's *Dorian Gray* bears more than a passing resemblance to the tale of the young Roman cursed with eternal youth and beauty, or that the toga play itself should have served as a jumping off point for his own ideas about what must have seemed like the timeless questions of the nature of beauty and the role of man, as artist, in its production.

Dorian's love for Sybil Vane, for instance, evaporates when she ceases to remain a purely artistic being of that theatrical world which Wilde praised so highly in *Claudian*. Sybil's protestation to feel for Dorian a love 'of which all art is but a reflection' (p.127) is repulsive firstly to his Pygmalion-like dream of becoming the creative force behind Sybil's future fame – 'to place her on a pedestal of gold and see the world worship the woman who is mine' (p.114) – and secondly to his decadent desire to live and love as a being entirely in art and 'to find [his] wife in Shakespeare's plays' (p.112). These issues are rendered as the central metaphor of decadent identity in the novel, as Dorian's own life and identity become sinisterly bound up with the image in the portrait. When asked about the moral of the novel, Wilde did not address conventional abstract notions of

[328] Wilde, 'The Truth of Masks', p.1068.
[329] Newey and Richards, *John Ruskin and the Victorian Theatre*, p.91.

Victorian morality, but offered an explanation based on the failure of the male characters to reconcile in one body and in one identity, key aspects of decadent masculinity. Basil Hallward 'worshipped physical beauty far too much'; Dorian 'abandoned himself to sensation and pleasure'; Henry Wotton 'sought only to be a spectator in life.'[330] The Neronian fantasies of Dorian Gray, then, were not intended merely to be controversial, but also to express a genuine decadent desire to experience life and identity as artistic constructs.

The use of Rome's most notoriously 'bad' emperor by decadent authors captures the duality that exists at the heart of decadent masculine identity. Firstly, it was, in part, typical of the parodic, iconoclastic and deliberately controversial tone of the movement. Just as early writers like Gautier and Baudelaire had embraced the term 'decadent' itself partly for its controversial associations with narratives of decline and degeneration, decadents of the fin de siècle stressed their affinity with Nero the criminal in order to affect a display of what Vance has termed 'perverse nostalgia'[331] for the Roman court, its mores, its distance from conventional Victorian morality, and its aesthetic tastes. Secondly, however, if we acknowledge ideas about the a-morality of art as stemming from more than a desire to antagonize a conservative readership and the more conventionally-constructed styles of masculinity championed as part of that conservatism, then Nero acquires a genuine value as a sign in the formulation and articulation of a coherent philosophy of decadent manliness. Understood in this way, Nero's criminality is largely irrelevant, and it is his love of music, poetry, and the stage, as well as his appreciation of sensation and pleasure, that mark him out as the embodiment of decadent values and taste. Nero's final words 'Qualis artifex pereo' ('What an artist dies in me!') encapsulated the choice of art over empire and other masculine 'duties' which the decadents of the fin de siècle sought to emulate in their own works. Thus, where l'Isle-Adam's Chaudval had misguidedly sought

[330] Cited in Gagnier, p.58.
[331] Vance, *The Victorians and Ancient Rome,* p.262.

'real' manliness in his retirement from the stage, Nero represents life lived through art, and manliness conceptualized and performed as a theatrical construct.

An examination of periodical publications from the final decade of the nineteenth century reveals that, despite fierce opposition from Philistine critics, alternative receptions of Nero that privilege his artistic achievements above his criminality were beginning to take root outside of purely decadent discourses, and were filtering down into the popular press. As we have seen already, George Henry Lewes's article 'Was Nero a Monster?', in cross-examining the legend of Nero's criminality according to the codes of Victorian science and jurisprudence, had framed the re-evaluation of Nero's legacy as a question of masculine and professional integrity. Lewes concludes that 'there is not for a rational inquisitive mind *any evidence whatever*' of Nero's complicity in the crimes upon which his reputation as a deviant and a monster is founded, and which have been 'universally accepted without question'[332] by subsequent generations of writers. Essays of this kind which interrogate the reliability of source material paved the way for fin-de-siècle reimaginings of Nero in the popular imagination, as well as a reassessment of the emperor's meaning as a sign in late Victorian codifications of masculinity.

In an 1890 article 'On the Character of Nero', Sir Hugh William Orange (1866-1956) insists upon the fundamentally theatrical role of the emperor in the ancient Roman state. He goes on to remark that, despite the traditional image of Nero as a 'bad' ruler, the last of the Julio-Claudians seems to have enjoyed great popularity among the Roman people in his lifetime, in contrast with other infamous emperors like Caligula.[333] Orange reframes the conventional narrative of Neronian degeneracy as a narrative of the tragic artist:

[332] Lewes, p.113.
[333] Hugh William Orange [Janus], 'On the Character of Nero', *Macmillan's Magazine,* 62 (June 1890), pp.135-139.

> He was indeed an artist throughout and an artist to the last […] Many of the world's actors become raw and amateurish in their exits. But Nero does not miss his cue.[334]

Furthermore, Orange's closing remarks on how best to understand the treatment of Nero in western reception tradition are startlingly close to decadent ideas on the a-morality of art and the artist:

> Fiction has not given us the perfect type of man without morals…But in Nero the conditions are satisfied […] As they forecast it, so those to whom judgement belongs must judge the life of a man whose memory is a loathing to all other sinners, from Jerome to Dean Merivale, because it has no cloak of moral pretence; to whom moral dread was as unknown as physical courage; who had not enough interest in holiness to become its antagonist, but lived with evil in primitive unconsciousness, naked and not ashamed.[335]

Even more startling in terms of late-Victorian revisionist treatments of Nero are descriptions of the emperor in the musical press, where we find Nero reinserted into a tradition or canon of musical geniuses. In 1881 *Monthly Musical Record* published a defence of 'The Emperor Nero as a Musical Dilettante', insisting that: 'Notwithstanding the doubtful character of his artistic successes, Nero left behind him the reputation of a talented composer, and a collection of his works was preserved for a long time.'[336] Like Lewes, the author makes no defence of Nero's character, but he does not deny Nero's achievements as an artist. Petronius, Nero's arbiter of taste, receives a similar revisionist treatment in cultural discourse, with historical and biographical works adopting a tone of awe and even admiration for the dedication of the Neronian court to the pursuit of the arts. J.F. Rowbotham writes of Petronius that 'What distinguishes the man above any other voluptuary who ever lived is that combination of intellectual pleasures with sensual which

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[334] Orange, p.138.
[335] Orange, p.139.
[336] [Anon.], 'The Emperor Nero as a Musical Dilettante', *Monthly Musical Record*, 11 (July 1881), pp.132-134 (p.133).

he effected, on the understanding that the art of enjoyment was thereby heightened.'[337] We have here a popular and public iteration of an essentially decadent model of masculinity. Rather than defaulting to a position of condemnation according to conservative models of decadence as effeminacy or failed masculinity, these texts highlight the discipline and refinement required to achieve such Petronian or Neronian heights of decadent manliness.

The decadents of the fin de siècle had placed Nero at the heart of a rhetoric of manliness which was both playfully antagonistic towards, and a genuine alternative to traditional styles of Victorian manliness. Where Pater had sought to reconcile aestheticism with the more conventional values of the Victorian gentleman, the decadents used Neronian Rome to stress the artificiality of masculinities which relied on abstract notions of virtue, morality and domesticity as axes onto which manliness could be plotted and measured. It was, as I have suggested, a model which was beginning to take root in the popular press by the final decade of the century, but which would ultimately become unstable with the scandal of the Wilde trials in 1895. Wilde's conviction for sodomy seemed for many to confirm Philistine condemnations of decadence as being both a symptom and a cause of sexual, moral and masculine deviance. In *The Trials of Oscar Wilde: Deviance, Morality, and Late-Victorian Society* (1997) Michael S. Foldy outlines in consecutive chapters the associations of homophobia, pathology, and social pollution respectively which attached themselves to Wilde and decadent ideologies in the years after the trial.[338] Likewise, Nero as an ideal of artistic masculinity became recriminalized as part of the public outcry surrounding the trial. His primary meaning, at least in mainstream or popular culture of the period, reverted or was reabsorbed back into the narratives of degeneration and decline described in the opening of this chapter. Henry Sienkiewicz's

[337] J.F. Rowbotham, 'Petronius', *Gentleman's Magazine,* 268 (May 1890), pp.515-527 (p.516).
[338] See Michael S. Foldy, *The Trials of Oscar Wilde: Deviance, Morality, and Late-Victorian Society* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997). See Joseph Bristow, 'Introduction', in *Oscar Wilde and Modern Culture: The Making of a Legend* ed. by Joseph Bristow (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2008), pp.1-45 (pp.1-2) on the hostile obituaries and reviews which were circulated in the wake of Wilde's death.

1895 novel *Quo Vadis*, for instance, was published in English translation in 1897, complete with illustrations by M. de Lipman which showed a portly, almost demonic, Nero fiddling while Rome burns.[339] The following year saw a further vilification of Nero with the release of Barrett's *Sign of the Cross*, which borrowed heavily from Sienkiewicz's novel. *Quo Vadis* was staged as a toga play in its own right in 1900, with cinematic adaptations to follow throughout the twentieth century. The popularity of these works attests to a need among Victorian readers and theatregoers to participate in the collective rejection of Nero – and often decadence more generally – as valid models of identity and masculinity.

The Decadents had laid claim to the same Roman examples and narratives as the New Imperialist and the Victorian gentleman, but with the aim of articulating radically different ideologies about manliness. It was a territorial struggle over authoritative uses of ancient Rome which began in decadent literature but had begun to take root in the wider, popular consciousness, before the Wilde trials resulted in the discrediting of decadent masculinities and the falling away of Nero as a masculine ideal. Twentieth-century representations of decadent Rome, as well as the 'man's man' masculine ideal that develops out of empire and major twentieth century military conflicts, can thus be seen to have their origins in the masculinist and essentially homophobic reaction to decadent uses of Nero in the late nineteenth century. It is only in recent decades, and with volumes like Emma Buckley and Martin Dinter's *Companion to the Neronian Age* (2013), that scholarship is beginning to re-engage in any serious or sustained way in the task of recontextualising and reinterpreting the meaning of Nero in western culture and his significance in the articulation of masculine ideality.

[339] Henry Sienkiewicz, *Quo Vadis: A Narrative in the Time of Nero* (Philadephia: Henry Altemus, 1897), [n.p.].

Conclusion

'Be Prepared': Ancient Rome and the Modern Man, 1900-1918

> I want […] to teach boys to face the world as it is, with all its vast energies and problems, rather than to initiate them painfully and unsuccessfully into ideas which, however fertile and inspiring they have been, are yet the forces of a vanished time.
>
> - A.C. Benson,'Our Gentlemen's Schools Again' (1912)[340]

> We badly need […] training for our lads if we are to keep up manliness in our race instead of lapsing into a nation of soft, sloppy, cigarette-suckers.'
>
> - Robert Baden Powell, *Rovering to Success* (1922)[341]

A.C. Benson and Robert Baden Powell's pronouncements are representative of what was, by the early twentieth century, a national preoccupation with the task of preparing boys to be men in a determinedly modern world. The efforts of the brightest and most enterprising men of recent decades had quickened the march of modernity in the form of an empire which governed one fifth of the world's population, and in innovations like electricity, the motorcar, the dreadnought, and the first manned flights. Yet modernity also presented serious ideological challenges to the stability of those male elite identities which have been the primary focus of this thesis. The cultural hegemony of Britain's elite male – which was largely, as I have argued, a result of his occupying the dominant point of reception in Victorian culture – was increasingly subject to encroachments from without, particularly from working class groups and women writers in the wake of the trade union and suffrage movements respectively. Furthermore, the Great War saw modernity terrifyingly

[340] A.C Benson, 'Our Gentlemen's Schools Again', *English Review* (October 1912), pp.457-469 (p.469). Hereafter cited parenthetically.
[341] Robert Baden Powell, *Rovering to Success: A Book of Life-Sport For Young Men* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1922), p.25.

transfigured into hot metal, with British men facing unprecedented physical and cultural trauma. For Baden Powell, writing after the war, anxieties about manliness and the training of British boys were closely bound up with the capacity of young men to withstand such physical trials. Fitness, strength and courage were the qualities required to defend national and imperial security. Indeed, discourses on physical fitness had begun to take on a moral dimension as early as the mid-nineteenth century, developing out of the new imperialist ideologies described here in chapter three, which styled the British Empire as the new Roman Empire, and the British male as the defender of its core values. Baden Powell's concern about unmanly 'softness' and 'sloppiness' can therefore be read as continuations of fin-de-siècle anxieties about degeneration, and the languid posing of the dandy in all his Neronian decadence.

For Benson, questions of how best to prepare Britain's youth to face the 'vast energies and problems' of the modern world were also, inevitably, questions about the role and relevance of a classical education in that process. Benson taught classics at public schools for almost twenty years before becoming an English lecturer, and eventually Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge. In his 1912 article 'Our Gentlemen's Schools Again', he voices his unease about the learning and teaching methods employed in Britain's elite schools. His primary concern in this piece is the narrowness of the curriculum, which forced all boys to learn classics on primarily 'grammatical and philological lines' (p.459), rather than as a vehicle for a broader education in western history, literature and thought:

> The classics […] are in no sense a general education. They are a very definite kind of specialism, and what public-school authorities do not know or do not confess is that boys trained on strict classical lines are all of them specialists, and suffer, as all specialists suffer, from a neglect of general education. What is to be deplored is that boys leave the public schools so entirely and contentedly ignorant of the conditions and problems of the modern world. (p.463)

Benson does not reject the potential value of the ancient world as a source of useful lessons and knowledge for Britain's boys, so long as such lessons are taught in the right way and in the correct ratio. Indeed, he insists that: 'I think that all boys whose profession is going to involve the use of words are bound to have some acquaintance with both Latin and Greek; any real breadth of culture is almost impossible without them' (p.459). But elite schools, he warns, were in danger of producing men who lacked sufficient training in writing in English, in 'arithmetic […] a general outline knowledge of European history, modern geography, and popular science' (p.463). In short, Benson laments the failure of the British educational establishment to prepare boys for the realities of the present and the challenges of the future:

> Must boys, whose staple nourishment is to be the classics, remain in a sort of mediæval dream, blissfully unconscious of the opening thought of the world, its visions, its hopes, its ideas, its problems? Is culture really not attainable on modern lines? (p.458)

It is worth noting just how differently classics, modernity, and masculinity are positioned here, when compared with the triumphant assertions of Thomas Arnold's *History of Rome* at the beginning of this thesis. We have moved significantly from a rhetorical position wherein, for Arnold in 1838, the modernity of the age provided the Victorian male with a privileged insight into the classical past, to one in which the classical past – or at least a classical education – was thought to produce men who were out of step with the twentieth-century present. Yet, at the same time, Benson's anxieties bear a striking resemblance to frustrations voiced half a century earlier by Charles Darwin and Elizabeth Gaskell's John Thornton, who dismissed the relevance of the classics to their own notions of scientific and industrial manhood. In many respects, then, this thesis, like Victorian receptions of Rome, ends where it began: with perpetually conflicting ideals of 'modern' and 'traditional' masculinity, and questions about the relevance of a classical education to the lives of the new generation of British men.

Yet if ancient Rome had truly lost its significance for articulations of manliness under the pressure of twentieth-century modernity, then the final blow for the Roman parallel should, logically, have come with the outbreak of the Great War. Widely acknowledged as the first modern conflict, the scale and scope of the war was shaped by those new forms of knowledge which were being advocated in place of conventional classical learning, and realized in the form of trench warfare, mechanized and chemical weapons, tanks, machine guns and aircraft. Conscription after 1916 meant that young men of all backgrounds, from the working classes to the classically-educated elite, were confronted with precisely those 'vast energies and problems' which Benson feared the elite male might be ill-equipped to deal with. And yet, as Elizabeth Vandiver has described in detail in her 2010 book *Stand in the Trench, Achilles,* the use of classical parallels by male writers persisted throughout the war, as soldiers found in ancient Roman narratives a renewed significance and relevance to their own experiences. Roman allusions were deployed to articulate national identities and to glorify specific military victories such as the defense of a bridge or the capture of a town, but they also appear with surprising regularity in private trench diaries and poems, used to figure deeply personal experiences of individual men in wartime. Vandiver writes that: 'Classics was enlisted to support and protest the war's genesis and its conduct, to validate and to call into question the sacrifice of young men's lives.'[342] In the war, then, as in the century that preceded it, it was the mutability of the Roman parallel which made Rome so continually relevant for different groups, and for a variety of national, social, aesthetic and ideological purposes.

Like many of the receptions discussed in this thesis, uses of antiquity in the Great War were fraught with complexities and contradictory meanings. Most glaringly controversial in the early years of the conflict was the Kaiser's invasion of neutral

[342] Elizabeth Vandiver, *Stand in the Trench, Achilles: Classical Receptions in British Poetry of the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p.30.

Belgium, in its invocation of Caesar's campaigns against the Belgae, and the problems of such a connection for British uses of the Roman past.[343] Where the Roman parallel had proved invaluable for constructions of British imperial manliness, and for framing imperial relationships with non-European races, its meaning becomes problematic when transposed back into a European context. Yet rather than abandon the Roman parallel in the face of problematic national associations, British writers chose to draw more determinedly on alternative and more ideologically compatible aspects of the Roman legacy. Indeed, we see a persistent utilization of the Roman past, or rather an urgent desire to prevent a rival nation from dominating the interpretation of that past, echoing the treatment of Rome in the immediate aftermath of Waterloo. It is also an insistent reclamation of the power of reception which would not have mattered if the Roman parallel was truly bankrupt of relevance and significance to modern ideologies, and to constructions of masculine identity at a national and individual level. As Vandiver notes, 'Rome's symbolic value was not fixed; what *was* fixed was its primacy as a point of reference.'[344]

In spite of the manifold complexities of the Roman parallel, one narrative that emerges particularly strongly during the war is the notion of a British masculine ideal based on selfless duty and sacrifice. It is, Vandiver insists, a much more widespread narrative in terms of social class, and much more sincere in its tone than has previously been acknowledged.[345] That the elites, many of whom had been recruited as officers on the basis of their classical education, should draw on those more traditional and familiar Roman pasts, even in the face of terrifying modernity, is perhaps not surprising. After all:

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[343] See Vandiver, pp.21-30.
[344] Vandiver, p.25.
[345] See especially, Vandiver, pp.15-21 on the misreading of Kipling's poem 'Common Form', which uses the poetry of Simonides as a model and reads: 'If any question why we died, | Tell them, because our fathers lied.' Vandiver disputes the interpretation of this poem as Kipling's criticism of his own generation in sending its sons to war. Instead, she asserts that: 'the "lie" told by the fathers was the claim that war could be avoided' (p.20).

> The public schools fostered a tendentious reading of classics that worked with a romanticized view of chivalry and with Christianity of the 'muscular' variety to impress upon their pupils the beauty of sacrifice, whether in the service of school, country or empire.[346]

Though specific methods of rote learning and classical grammar were widely held to be irrelevant to the lived realities of young men in the early twentieth century, the masculine ethos and collective identities fostered among elite boys at public schools remained a binding tie for officers in the Great War, and one which was reinforced and underwritten by shared experiences of learning Latin and Greek.

It is much more striking to find a fairly widespread use of Roman allusions, and even Latin tags, by working and middle class soldiers writing in the trenches. Most famously, Wilfred Owen's poem 'Dulce et Decorum est' (1917) uses lines taken from Horace's third Ode, and is one of numerous poems from the period which rely for their meaning on a basic understanding of Latin among their readers.[347] However, the most widely-cited allusions to ancient Rome by non-elite authors are those mediated through subsequent adaptations, usually by Shakespeare, Keats, Shelley and, most often, by Thomas Macaulay. Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome*, though published in 1842, enjoyed an enduring popularity in the late-nineteenth century, particularly among schoolboys. Indeed, there were sixty three editions of the *Lays* published between 1842 and 1939, many of which were penny editions or volumes intended for use in the schoolroom.[348] Macaulay's tales of the heroes of early Rome – such as Horatius Cocles's holding of the Sublician Bridge against the Etruscans, or the courage of the Roman soldiers at Lake Regilius – were used as models to talk about the valour and sacrifice of Britain's soldiers in the Great War. As we saw in the introduction to this thesis, the *Lays*, when first

[346] Vandiver, p.36.
[347] See Vandiver, pp.108-110 for more on Owen's poem as well as his non-elite background, which is often overlooked by critics.
[348] See Catharine Edwards, 'Translating Empire? Macaulay's Rome', in *Roman Presences: Receptions of Rome in European Culture, 1789-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp.70-87 (p.70); Vandiver, p.97.

published, employed what was at the time a contemporary rhetoric of reform and abolition as a way of glorifying notions of popular, democratic and statesmanly masculinity. By the early twentieth century, the same text was being used to promote a quite different set of comradely and military ideals, though admittedly ones which remained rooted in notions of duty to one's country and countrymen. This fundamental fluidity of meaning explains why the Roman parallel remained relevant for framing masculine experiences during the Great War, and indeed during the entire century which preceded it. Aside from its being enshrined at the centre of elite male culture for thousands of years, the Roman legacy was so vast and multifaceted that its meaning could never be made static or entirely stable. With no single fixed meaning, the significance of Rome could never pass into irrelevancy. Rather, Rome was continually acquiring new contexts and relevance for new points of reception both individual and collective, as well as being a space of conflict and contest for those groups.

Even this brief look at Great War receptions indicates the extent to which the meanings assigned to ancient Rome, as well as the significance of Rome for constructions of masculinity, continued to evolve beyond the Victorian period. Indeed, though it is beyond the scope of this thesis, uses of antiquity for articulating changing gender ideals have continued to develop even into the present day, with works such as Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* (2000) or Robert Harris's Cicero trilogy (2006; 2009) promoting a very different kind of contemporary manliness to the hyper-violent machismo glorified in HBO's *Rome* series, Starz's *Spartacus: Blood and Sand* (2010), or Frank Miller's *300* (1998; 2007). This thesis has traced some of those evolutions in nineteenth-century culture, with a view to establishing that it is the conflicts and constant cultural renegotiations over the Roman legacy which can be most telling about the gender ideals and anxieties of any given age.

In the Victorian period Rome was claimed by the man of letters, the radical reformer, the muscular Christian, the imperialist, and the dandy to signify masculine ideals as diverse as taciturn statesmanship, political violence, acquisitive expansionism, artistic or performative selfhood, and self-sacrifice in the name of one's country and brothers in arms. My first chapter orientated such receptions in Victorian educational debates about the classics, particularly as they applied to formulations of the nineteenth-century Man of Letters. I established that Rome was more deeply ingrained in the elite male psyche than has previously been allowed for, and that the Roman heritage, with its great poets and philosophers as well as its generals, encompasses both writing and fighting as masculine acts. As such, we have seen in figures as diverse as Leigh Hunt's Captain Pen and Kipling's Stalky how the militaristic associations of Rome often get downplayed or repurposed by writers in order to privilege a model of literary masculinity which is an equivalent to more physically combative styles, though its manliness is derived from intellectual combat rather than physical aggression.

Chapter two examined broader international conflicts over the Roman parallel, and the consequences of French receptions of Rome for British political manliness. Enthusiastic adoption of both republican and imperial Rome by Napoleon and the revolutionaries rendered the Roman parallel too incendiary and unstable for use in debates about political reform – and constructions of political manliness – in the 1830s. By the 1860s and 70s, however, the hesitancy of politicians to re-engage with Rome had become a source of frustration for writers like Anthony Trollope, who defiantly constructed political, even partisan masculinities through extended reference to figures like Caesar and Cicero.

Chapters three and four explored the far more directly antagonistic relationship between the New Imperialist and the Dandy in late-Victorian culture. Where New Imperialist discourse drew heavily on examples from the Roman Empire to celebrate

robust, acquisitive manliness, decadent authors delighted in undermining imperialist condemnation by laying claim to the more subversive or illicit aspects of the Roman past. Thus, even at a time when elite male cultural hegemonies faced challenges from without – from the lower-middle and working classes, as well as from women's suffrage movements – there were equally anxious conflicts being fought within the seemingly singular category of the masculine. These conflicts were often played out as territorial struggles over the ancient Roman parallel and over which individuals or groups could claim to represent the dominant point of reception.

On the question of classical reception, Kenneth Haynes insists that the reception of a classical work 'is not a sequence of misreadings continually corrected by the progress of scholarship but rather a demonstration that a great work of art is *toujours en acte*, its truth never finished.'[349] In light of Haynes's observation, I have not attempted to 'finish' the meaning of Rome or to homogenize its uses as part of a single theory of what Rome meant to the Victorian male. Rather, this study has sought to emphasize the plurality, complexity and sheer number of receptions which were happening concurrently in the Victorian cultural imagination, and thereby to theorize a model in which Victorian masculinity, whatever its particular style or values, is inherently rooted in the power of reception.

[349] Haynes, p.49.

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