CHAPTER 1

The Mediterranean

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Part and Whole: The Metonymic Mediterranean

The rotunda of Ickworth House in Suffolk features two bas-relief friezes detailing scenes from Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (Figs. 1.1, I.2, and 1.3). The lower frieze is framed by Ionic columns while the upper frieze sits atop Corinthian columns, serving as a cornice. The rotunda itself is in the Palladian style, having been designed by the Italian architect Antonio Asprucci, better known for his work on the Villa Borghese in Rome. The friezes were created by Casimiri and Donato Casabelli, after engravings by Tomasso Piroli based on John Flaxman's illustrations (1793), which were derived from ancient sculpture Flaxman studied in Rome, and were subsequently accompanied in print by Alexander Pope's Homeric translations. The rotunda was commissioned by Frederick Hervey (1730–1803), the 4th Earl of Bristol and Bishop of Derry, who had travelled extensively in Italy. Ickworth not only bears the weight of Mediterranean classical antiquity, but also exemplifies the interfused, recursive narratives and traditions which constitute that antiquity, and as such serves as a metaphor for this opening chapter's tracing of those narratives across two distinct, though interconnected, cultural cruces: the medieval Matter of Troy and the Romantic response to the Parthenon, or Elgin, Marbles.[1] Each of these illustrations of the image and imaginary of the Mediterranean as being both an English and British cultural inheritance speaks to a moment of national identity born of the fragmentation of the Mediterranean into self and other, past and present, West and East.

[1] The chapter deliberately avoids the Renaissance, insofar as that is possible, as there is already a chapter devoted to this pan-European intellectual project in the volume (see Chapter 7, by David Rundle).

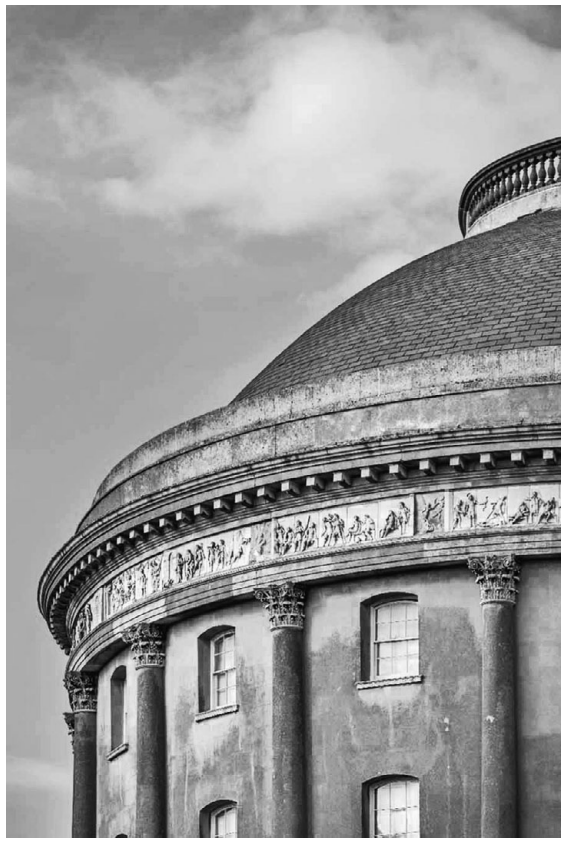

Figure 1.1 Close view of the rotunda roof, Ickworth, Suffolk.

The thematic thread which ties the two instances together, as a means of traversing the immense distances between the Homeric epics (eighth century BC) and the early nineteenth century, is the metonymic relationship between architectonic unity and fragmentation, which Keats terms 'the shadow of a magnitude'.[2] The fragment (part) in each case triggers the imaginative reconstruction of the whole, for which it substitutes, and thereby constitutes the basis of a claim to the whole. In the case of Mediterranean antiquity, the ruined whole – whether that be fallen

[2] 'On Seeing the Elgin Marbles', line 14, in John Keats, *The Complete Poems*, ed. John Barnard, 3rd ed. (London: Penguin, 2007), pp. 99–100.

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Figure 1.2 Detail of a section of the rotunda's lower frieze, depicting the ancient Olympic Games, Ickworth, Suffolk.

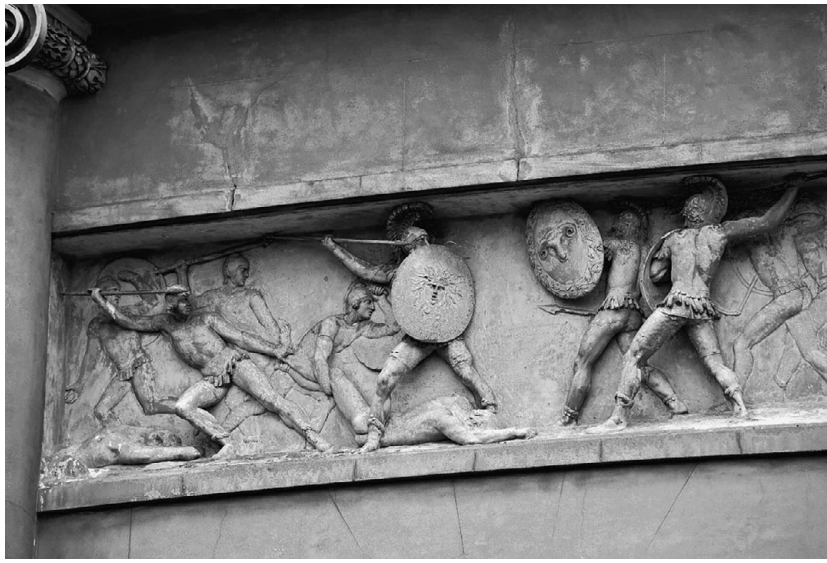

Figure 1.3 Close detail of the lower frieze on the rotunda at Ickworth, Suffolk.

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Troy, the Roman Empire, or its reconstitution as Christendom – begets parts which become 'imagined communities'.[3] Each instance thus examines an act of imaginative retrospection, a return to the metanarrative of Greco-Roman antiquity, which is framed by a historical pressure point of national self-definition: England in the late fourteenth century, Britain in the early nineteenth century. Such self-definition draws upon the epic imagination, hence the return to antiquity at such crucial moments. Ultimately, the chapter's emphasis on the dialectic of unity/fragmentation confirms that the narrative of a shared, antique, Mediterranean monoculture is riven by competing or contested histories – as is expressed by the cultural patchwork of the Ickworth rotunda.

The diverse cultural parts of the Mediterranean imaginary that comprise Ickworth are analogous to the fragment – which itself is a recurrent image of inherited antiquity. In his 1570 educational treatise *The Scholemaster*, Roger Ascham wrote of the remnants of classical knowledge: 'Som pėeces remaine, like broken Iewelles, whereby men may rightlie esteme and iustly lament, the losse of the whole.'[4] The fragments of Mediterranean antiquity are to be gathered, ordered, and reformulated, to fashion the 'yonge men, namely, Ientlemen' who at present possess 'to moch libertie, to liue as they lust'. These young gentlemen must go forth to govern themselves, England (and latterly Britain), and its territories, and also to provide a defence against the pernicious influence of the modern Mediterranean. There is, in this narrative, a good and bad Mediterranean, as Ascham writes: '*Italie* now, is not that *Italie*, that it was wont to be.'[5]

Yet long before the educational revolution engendered by Renaissance humanism in sixteenth-century England – whereby being a good Englishman meant speaking Latin and Greek, the languages of the unified Mediterranean of antiquity – the fall of Troy had been established as the foundation of Britain, even though Britain would not exist until centuries later.

Far over the French Flood: The Medieval Trojan Diaspora

In the anonymously authored late fourteenth-century poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the founding of Europe by the Trojan diaspora is recalled:

[3] See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 2006).

[4] Roger Ascham, *The Scholemaster* (London: John Daye, 1570), sig. Diii^{v}.

[5] Ibid., sigs. Bii^{v}, Hiii^{v}.

SIÞEN þe sege and þe assaut watz sesed at Troye,
Þe borȝ brittened and brent to brondeȝ and askez,
Þe tulk þat þe trammes of tresoun þer wroȝt
Watz tried for his tricherie, þe trewest on erthe:
Hit watz Ennias þe athel, and his highe kynde,
Þat siþen depreced prouinces, and patrounes bicome
Welneȝe of al þe wele in þe west iles.
Fro riche Romulus to Rome ricchis hym swyþe,
With gret bobbaunce þat burȝe he biges vpon fyrst,
And neuenes hit his aune nome, as hit now hat;
Tirius to Tuskan and teldes bigynnes,
Langaberde in Lumbardie lyftes vp homes,
And fer ouer þe French flod Felix Brutus
On mony bonkkes ful brode Bretayn he settez
wyth wynne,
Where werre and wrake and wonder
Bi syþez hatz wont þerinne,
And oft boþe blysse and blunder
Ful skete hatz skyfted synne.[6]

The origins of medieval Europe, according to this narrative – the dominant narrative of European identity at the time – are found in the fall of Troy in the eastern Mediterranean (western Anatolia or Asia Minor; modern-day Turkey), which by way of *translatio imperii* established the communities of the western Mediterranean ('þe west iles'). The pseudo-etymology of the poem conflates myth with history by tracing toponyms: Romulus to Rome, Tirius to Tuscany, Langaberde in Lombardy, and far over the French flood (English Channel) Brutus builds Britain. The history of Britain reiterates its foundation through the fragmentation of the Mediterranean by being riven by division: war and wrack and wonder, bliss and blunder have alternated dizzyingly since its founding ('ful skete hatz skyfted synne'), to the point that its national character is predicated

[6] J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon (eds.), *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, rev. Norman Davis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), I.1–19. My translation: 'Since the siege and the assault of Troy had ceased, / The burgh battered and burnt to brands and ashes, / The one that set the snares of treason there / Was tried for his treachery, the surest on earth: / It was the man Aeneas, and his noble kind, / That since liberated provinces, and became patrons / Of almost all the wealth in the Western Isles. / When noble Romulus reaches Rome swiftly, / With great occasion that city he founds first / And gives it his own name, which it now has; / Tirius [travels] to Tuscany and begins [building] dwellings, / Langaberde in Lombardy raises homes, / And far over the French Flood [English Channel] Felix Brutus / On many broad banks founds Britain with pride, / Where war and wrack and wonder / Many times have happened therein, / And often both bliss and blunder / Have swiftly shifted since.'

on conflict: 'Bolde bredden þerein, barat þat lofden' ('Bold men bred therein, that loved conflict').[7]

The Gawain-poet's source is Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae* (*History of the Kings of Britain*), which details Brutus's dispossession of the natives of Britain (*avant la lettre*) to establish Albion, and its capital, Troia Nova, or New Troy (I.17).[8] Geoffrey's description of Britain (I.5) recalls that of Tacitus in the *Agricola* (10, 12); we view the land through the conqueror's eye, measuring its natural resources:

> Britain, the best of islands, lies in the western ocean between France and Ireland; eight hundred miles long by two hundred miles wide, it supplies all human needs with its boundless productivity. Rich in metals of every kind, it has broad pastures and hills suitable for successful agriculture, in whose rich soil various crops can be harvested in their season.[9]

This, of course, makes perfect sense. Monmouth was a de facto propagandist for the Normans, who had successfully invaded Britain seventy years earlier.[10] Indeed, Patterson notes that '[a]s European monarchs (including England's Henry II and the future Henry V) knew, the Trojan myth provided above all a typology of monarchical legitimacy; as empire descended from the Trojans, so too monarchy enjoyed a genealogical authority', such as we find in the genealogy that opens *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.[11] In their empire-building, which spanned the Mediterranean – from Sicily and Sardinia they had strategic advantage relative to Byzantium in the East and the north African coast (Maghreb) in the south – the Normans claimed to be restoring (some of) the unity caused by the fragmentation attendant upon the fall of the Roman Empire, albeit on a far smaller scale, and with a view to securing trade routes and extending personal power.[12] Geoffrey's history was thus enjoined to make Britain co-extensive with its Mediterranean cultural ancestry, as Geoffrey

[7] *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, I.21 (my translation).
[8] On Trojan dispossession of insular natives see J. J. Cohen, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), pp. 29–61.
[9] Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, ed. Michael D. Reeve, trans. Neil Wright (Woodbridge: Brewer, 2009), p. 6.
[10] 'While Geoffrey of Monmouth's political sympathies remain obscure, his narrative was quickly appropriated by the initially insecure and later imperialistic Henry II': Lee Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 92.
[11] Ibid., pp. 161–2.
[12] See David Abulafia, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean* (London: Penguin, 2014), pp. 281–6, and Liam Fitzgerald and Emily A. Winkler (eds.), *The Normans in the Mediterranean* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021).

records Julius Caesar declaring when he first looks upon the coast of Britain (IV.54) :

> By Hercules, we Romans and the Britons share a common ancestry, being both descended from the Trojans. After the sack of Troy our first ancestor was Aeneas, theirs Brutus, whose father was Silvius, son of Aeneas's son Ascanius.[13]

The Brutus myth, though debunked by Polydore Virgil in his history of Britain of 1513 (pub. 1534), was still used by Thomas Cromwell in order to establish Britain's status as an empire when making the case for Henry VIII's break with Rome in 1534.[14] Again, 'ful skete hatz skyfted' the narrative from unity to fragmentation as Henry broke away from the cultural monolith of Christendom.

The boundaries of Europe were superimposed, though fragmented across the fault lines of proto-nation states, upon the boundaries of medieval Christendom, which occupied the western Mediterranean, distinct from Byzantium. The eastern and southern Mediterranean, at least by the time when the Gawain-poet was writing, traced the expanding boundaries of *hethenesse*. Indeed, the Orientalist fantasies of medieval romance bespeak a deep anxiety over Ottoman expansionism. *Cristendom* and *hethenesse* are the binary terms used by the Gawain-poet's contemporary Geoffrey Chaucer, whose Mediterranean credentials have been amply vouched.[15] Chaucer's Knight spent his career traversing the Great Sea:

> Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,
> And therto hadde he riden, no man ferre,
> As wel in cristendom as in hethenesse,
> And ever honoured for his worthynesse;
> At Alisaundre he was whan it was wonne.
> Ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bigonne
> Aboven alle nacions in Pruce;
> In Lettow hadde he reysed and in Ruce,
> No Cristen man so ofte of his degree.
> In Gernade at the seege eek hadde he be
> Of Algezir, and riden in Belmarye.
> At Lyeys was he and at Satalye,

[13] Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, p. 68.
[14] See for example the 1532 Statute in Restraint of Appeals (24 Hen VIII c 12).
[15] See for example Marion Turner, *Chaucer: A European Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019).

> Whan they were wonne, and in the Grete See
> At many a noble armee hadde he be. (*Knight's Tale*, I.47–60)[16]

Here we have an account of a military career spanning forty years, but also a map of the Mediterranean as it was conceived by a late fourteenth-century English readership. The earliest reference is to the siege of Algeciras in Spain, which ended in 1344. Algeciras had been under Islamic rule for centuries until the Christian victory, before being retaken by Muslim forces in 1368 and destroyed. At the other end we have the Knight's activities in Prussia, where the Teutonic Order of Knights had many years before suppressed the native non-Christian Prussians and had absorbed Prussia into their state. However, between his activities of the 1340s and 1380s we have a series of battles, sieges, and massacres in which the Knight served Pierre de Lusignan, or Peter I of Cyprus, perhaps the most well-known fourteenth-century crusader. 'Alisaundre' refers to Alexandria in Egypt, which Peter of Cyprus captured on 10 October 1365. Peter's forces abandoned the city a week later, after massacring its inhabitants and looting it.[17]

Four years earlier, Peter had attacked Antalya (Satalye), and in 1367 he captured Ayash; both lay in the Turkish province of Anatolia (the former site of Troy), and both are listed in the Knight's expeditions. If anyone had a claim to being the Knight's lord, then, it was Peter of Cyprus. Indeed, he is lauded by Chaucer's Monk as a model of Christian virtue:

> O worthy Petro, kyng of Cipre, also,
> That Alisandre wan by heigh maistrie,
> Ful many an hethen wroghtestow ful wo,
> Of which thyne owene liges hadde envie
> And for no thyng but for thy chivalrie
> They in thy bed han slayn thee by the morwe. (*Monk's Tale*, VII.2391–6)

There are various reasons why a fourteenth-century English reader might view the bloody conquest of Alexandria as a victory, and why they would celebrate wreaking woe upon the heathens. Aside from the obvious reason of religious cultural identity, there is the unavailability of all the facts. One of the architects and certainly the chief propagandist of Peter's campaigns was Philippe de Mézières, an author and soldier of fortune. Crucially, Philippe had befriended Peter before he became king of both Cyprus and

[16] All quotations of Chaucer are taken from *The Riverside Chaucer*, gen. ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

[17] See Aziz Suryal Atiya, *Crusade, Commerce and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 103–4.

Jerusalem, and he was made Peter's chancellor upon his accession. Peter's campaigns and engagements were thus subject to political spin, in today's terms. For example, one of Chaucer's key sources for the accounts of Alexandria, Antalya, and Ayash was a poem by Guillaume de Machaut, entitled *La Prise d'Alexandrie*, or *The Capture of Alexandria*, which glorified Peter's campaigns just as Chaucer's Monk does in miniature. In reality, Peter was not quite the flower of chivalry. He had treated certain of his nobles brutally, alienating his own brothers in the process, following a rumour that his wife Eleanor had been unfaithful while he was away on campaign. His actions constituted tyranny, and on 17 January 1369 Peter was murdered by his own men. The knights who murdered him and mutilated his body were also bound up in the political fallout of the attack upon Alexandria, for which the Sultan of Egypt had sworn revenge. Nevertheless, the murder of Peter by his own knights was an outrage of the core principles of chivalry and fealty, which Chaucer's Knight is said to represent: 'he loved chivalrie, / Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisie' (*General Prologue*, I.45–6). Peter came to be viewed after his death as the personification of *European* chivalric ideals, as the Monk notes: 'for no thyng but for thy chivalrie / They in thy bed han slayn thee'. Chaucer's Monk was not alone in his praise of the murdered king: as well as Machaut and De Mézières, the great chronicler of the fourteenth century, Jean Froissart, as well as Christine de Pizan, all praised Peter.

Yet it is too great a simplification to view *cristendom* and *hethenesse* as constituting a rigid cultural binary. There is no easy East–West dichotomy to be seen in the models of exchange that traverse the medieval Mediterranean, which incorporated England into its trade routes. Indeed, Chaucer's Knight exemplifies the intersection of mercantile and military exchange by being a professional soldier who goes where the money is, which runs contrary to a crusader ideology. The simplification of the Knight also entails a further simplification of East and West such as one finds in later colonial narratives. Even ideologues such as De Mézières sought to learn from the Muslim forces they fought against. He proposed a new order of military discipline after witnessing first-hand the discipline of the Saracen army at the Battle of Smyrna in 1346. He laid this order out in his work the *Nova religio passionis* (*New Order of the Passion*), which he reworked over a thirty-year period (1367–96). In this treatise the order of the Islamic military is compared to the disorder of the Christian soldiers. Chaucer's Knight further unsettles any easy dichotomy between East and West by means of certain of his engagements. We are told, for example, that the Knight fought at Tramyssene, or Tlemcen, in north-east Algeria.

However, there were no Christian campaigns in Tlemcen in the fourteenth century. There were, however, European mercenaries serving Arab commanders. Likewise the reference to Palatye, or Balat: the Knight is likely to represent one of the Christian mercenaries who fought on behalf of the Sultan of Balat against the Sultan of Magnesia in 1355. And before we get bogged down in the question of how a Christian knight could fight as a mercenary, and especially as a mercenary in the pay of heathens, to use the Monk's term, it must be noted that this form of military employment was approved by the Catholic Church. So when Chaucer writes that the Knight 'hadde he riden, no man ferre, / As wel in cristendom as in hethenesse', he may be telling us more than he appears. Indeed, Cyprus, like the other key Mediterranean islands – Sicily, Sardinia, Tunisia, Crete – is a part that is representative of the whole mercantile-military complex, which depended on intercultural exchange. As David Abulafia records of Sicily, '[u]nder Norman rule, the island flourished: Messina attracted Latin merchants, acting as a staging-post on the trade routes linking Genoa and Pisa to Acre and Alexandria'.[18] If religion divided the medieval Mediterranean, trade united it.

If the character of Britain in the fourteenth century was indebted to the historiographical traditions of the Trojan diaspora and the fragmentation of the Pax Romana, then it faced another challenge from within. Britain, in the fourteenth century, did not exist as a political entity. It was a historical term – an idea or image rather than a reality. Three hundred years after the Normans required a History of Britain to legitimize their conquest by subsuming Britain back into its Mediterranean origins, the Hundred Years War necessitated the construction of Englishness. Courtly culture in England in the later fourteenth century was still French. A new cultural identity had to be fashioned in order to fight the French. In the 1360s Edward III required that court records begin to be kept in English.[19] This was part of a wider cultural move to distinguish English culture – distinct from the idea of Britain, distinct from French ancestry. The king's beloved equerry, who until that point had written shorter verse in French, was suddenly at the right place at the right time to become the Father of English Poetry. And yet his poetry could not be English in any pure sense, as his culture was Mediterranean. So Chaucer became, according to the French poet Eustace Deschamps, the 'Grant translateur,

[18] Abulafia, *The Great Sea*, p. 318.
[19] See W. M. Ormrod, 'The Use of English: Language, Law, and Political Culture in Fourteenth-Century England', *Speculum*, 78/3 (2003): 750–87.

noble Geoffroy Chaucier'.[20] Arguably Chaucer's earliest English poem, the *Book of the Duchess*, is an amalgamation of the poetry of Guillaume de Machaut, Jean Froissart (the French author who spent decades in England), Jean de Meun, and Guillaume de Lorris. He would go on to introduce English readers to the Italian avant-garde: Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarch. The origins of English poetry have their foundations in the poetic traditions Chaucer encountered at court and in embassy, ambassadorship being the art of bringing fragments to unity by repairing political fractures. Chaucer's political engagements on the continent on behalf of the kings he served – dynastic, financial, military, mercantile – have been well attested, but still illustrate the Mediterranean negotiations essential to England's sense of itself.[21]

The Shadow of a Magnitude: Elgin's Fragments

It was another conflict with France, the Napoleonic Wars, which returned the currency of Britain's Mediterranean inheritance to the forefront of national identity in a debate over cultural appropriation that continues to this day. Napoleon's plundering of Italian artworks from 1796 onwards ended in 1815 following his defeat at Waterloo, when the stolen artworks began to be restored to Italy.[22] At the same time, the British government was ratifying Lord Elgin's removal of marbles from the Parthenon, a process finalized in 1816.[23] Unlike Napoleon's imitation of a Roman *triumphus*, Elgin's sanctioned appropriation of the marbles stemmed from Britain's sense of its classical Mediterranean legacy, and the claim that the British government was acting out of benevolence in preserving the artefacts from vandalism and ruination, as celebrated in an issue of the *Annals of the Fine Arts* published in 1819, which was dedicated as follows:

> To the Right Honourable,
> Thomas, Earl of Elgin,
> *&c. &c. &c.*
> In Respect and Admiration

[20] Quoted in W. T. Rossiter, *Chaucer and Petrarch* (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2010), p. 5. See also Chapter 16 in this volume, by William T. Rossiter and Duncan Large.

[21] On Chaucer's civic, parliamentary, courtly, and diplomatic roles see Marion Turner, *Chaucer: A European Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019) and Paul Strohm, *Social Chaucer* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

[22] See Angela Esterhammer, 'Translating the Elgin Marbles: Byron, Hemans, Keats', *The Wordsworth Circle*, 40/1 (2009): 29–36 (pp. 29–30).

[23] See William St Clair, *Lord Elgin and His Marbles: The Controversial History of the Parthenon Sculptures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 162–72.

of his
Energy and Perseverance
In
Rescuing the Splendid Remains
of
Grecian Genius
from the
Hands of Barbarians
This
Volume is Respectfully Dedicated

The dedication carries a footnote which reads:

> In the last Edinburgh Review, Lord Elgin is praised for having rescued the Marbles from destruction!! This is indeed a triumph for Lord Elgin and the Government. Time has at last wrung this acknowledgement from the iron obstinacy of the Opposition and yet had their voice been listened to, what would have become of the Elgin Marbles? ED.[24]

Here the familiar opposition is played out between East ('Barbarians') and West ('Grecian Genius'), whereby both the *translatio imperii* and the *translatio studii* find their terminus in the British Empire as the rightful heir to Mediterranean antiquity. The use of the term 'triumph', however, brings the Tory rescue mission uncomfortably close to Napoleon's imperial seizure of Italian art, and the critique of the obstinate Whig opposition confirms that the removal was contentious. Indeed, a decade earlier in his critique of the *Edinburgh Review*, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809), Byron had described the Marbles as 'Phidian freaks, / Misshapen monuments, and maimed antiques' (lines 1029–30), referring to their fraction, but implicitly likening them to the visitors' galleries in the asylums, which were frequented for pleasure by wealthy Londoners.[25] In the second canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Byron identifies Lord Elgin specifically:

[24] *Annals of the Fine Arts for MDCCCXVIII*, 3/8 (1819): i. The Parthenon was in a state of ruin. In 1687, during the Ottoman–Venetian wars, it was being used as a gunpowder store by the Ottoman forces when it was hit by a Venetian cannonball, which caused catastrophic damage. It subsequently became a ransacked part of a military base, far removed from today's archeological site. See Mary Beard, *The Parthenon* (London: Profile, 2002), p. 88.

[25] Lord Byron, *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann, 7 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980–93), I (1980), p. 261. All quotations from Byron are taken from this edition. For many years the marbles sat neglected in a London attic, as Keats's friend B. R. Haydon recorded in his diary (13 May 1815): 'I came home from the Elgin Marbles melancholy. I almost wish the French had them; we do not deserve such productions. There they lie, covered with dust and dripping with damp.' Quoted in Grant F. Scott, 'Beautiful Ruins: The Elgin Marbles Sonnet in Its Historical and Generic Contexts', *Keats–Shelley Journal*, 39 (1990): 123–50 (sp. 126).

But who, of all the plunders of yon fane
On high, where Pallas linger'd, loth to flee
The latest relic of her ancient reign;
The last, the worst, dull spoiler, who was he?
Blush, Caledonia! such thy son could be!
England! I joy no child he was of thine:
Thy free-born men should spare what once was free;
Yet they could violate each saddening shrine,
And bear these altars o'er the long-reluctant brine. (II.91–9)[26]

Elgin, the 'last, the worst, dull spoiler', has violated the shrine of Pallas – his dullness being set against her wisdom. The image, moreover, of the altars borne 'o'er the long reluctant brine' is recalled in a poem first published in that same 1819 issue of the *Annals of the Fine Arts*:

My spirit is too weak – mortality
  Weighs heavily on me like unwilling sleep,
  And each imagined pinnacle and steep
Of godlike hardship tells me I must die
Like a sick eagle looking at the sky.
  Yet 'tis a gentle luxury to weep
  That I have not the cloudy winds to keep
Fresh for the opening of the morning's eye.
Such dim-conceived glories of the brain
  Bring round the heart an undescribable feud;
So do these wonders a most dizzy pain,
  That mingles Grecian grandeur with the rude
Wasting of old time – with a billowy main –
  A sun – a shadow of a magnitude.[27]

The 'billowy main' of the much-debated closing lines of Keats's sonnet cannot help but echo Byron's condemnation in *Childe Harold*, yet Keats's lines are much debated precisely because of their ambiguity, or ambivalence. Byron's position is clear: the Parthenon was despoiled, violated, mutilated by Elgin. The democratic freedom which was England's true inheritance from Greece ought to have stayed Elgin's hand: 'free-born men should spare what once was free'. Keats's position is less clear, hence the 'undescribable feud' in his heart. His reference to the 'Grecian grandeur' mingled with 'the rude Wasting of old time', while it points to Byron's admission that 'nor ev'n can Fancy's eye / Restore what Time hath labour'd to deface', and the Parthenon's 'latent grandeur', also chimes

[26] Byron, The Complete Poetical Works, II (1980), p. 47.
[27] *Annals of the Fine Arts for MDCCCXVIII*, 3/8 (1819): 172.

with (and possibly inspired) the 'Grecian Genius' of the *Annals* editor's dedication to Elgin (*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, II.86–8).

However, there is a further, as yet (to my knowledge) undetected reference in these lines that underlines the British arrogation of Greek cultural heritage. We are told in Keats's earlier sonnet 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer' (1816) that 'Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold' (line 1), whereby the gilt leaves of poetry volumes become the El Dorado sought by 'stout Cortez' and his imperialist conquistadors.[28] It is by looking again in Chapman's Homer that we find the source for Keats's conclusion to the Elgin Marbles sonnet, when, in one of the Homeric poem's most memorable scenes, the naked, shipwrecked Odysseus presents himself to the princess Nausicaa:

> Let me beseech, O queen, this truth of thee –
> Are you of mortal or the deified race?
> If of the gods that th'ample heavens embrace,
> I can resemble you to none above
> So near as to the chaste-born birth of Jove,
> The beamy Cynthia. Her you full present
> In grace of every godlike lineament:
> Her goodly magnitude, and all th'address
> You promise of her very perfectness.[29]

The juxtaposition of 'every godlike lineament' and 'Her goodly magnitude' confirms these lines as Homeric bases for Keats's poem, whereby the former returns as 'godlike hardship' and the latter in 'the shadow of a magnitude'. The fragments, the misshapen parts of Elgin's excisions are the shadow of a magnitude which is, in the first instance, the Parthenon, but in the second instance the British imaginary of Mediterranean antiquity, which includes Homer, and which grants licence for the removal of sacred cultural objects, as Byron lamented:

> Cold is the heart, fair Greece, that looks on thee,
> Nor feels as lovers o'er the dust they loved;
> Dull is the eye that will not weep to see
> Thy walls defaced, thy mouldering shrines removed

[28] Keats, 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer', in *Complete Poems*, p. 72.

[29] Homer, *Odyssey*, VI.220–8, in George Chapman, *Homer's Odyssey*, ed. Gordon Kendal, Andrew Hadfield, and Neil Rhodes (Cambridge: MHRA, 2016), 141. Keats's sonnet was written after he spent the night reading Chapman's Homer with his old schoolfriend Charles Cowden Clarke, poring over 'some of the "famousest" passages, as we had scrappily known them in Pope's version'. See 'Recollections of Keats. By an Old School-Fellow', *Atlantic Monthly*, 7/39 (1861): 86–100 (p. 90).

> By British hands, which it had best behov'd
> To guard those relics ne'er to be restored.
> Curst be the hour when their isle they roved,
> And once again thy hapless bosom gored,
> And snatch'd thy shrinking Gods to northern climes abhorr'd!
> (*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, II.127–35)

And will they never be restored? In March 2021, in his first interview with a European newspaper since being elected UK Prime Minister, Boris Johnson ruled out the possibility:

> I understand the strong feelings of the Greek people – and indeed prime minister [Kyriakos] Mitsotakis – on the issue [. . .] But the UK government has a firm longstanding position on the sculptures, which is that they were legally acquired by Lord Elgin under the appropriate laws of the time and have been legally owned by the British Museum's trustees since their acquisition.[30]

Just as Chapman made Homer English, so Elgin made the Parthenon Marbles British. As Benjamin West, President of the Royal Academy at the time, wrote: 'Your Lordship, by bringing these treasures of the first and best age of sculpture and architecture into London, has founded a new Athens for the emulation and example of the British student.'[31] Whether laws which were appropriate at the time – which, as the *Annals* editor showed, was not uncontested – are appropriate today remains to be seen. Interestingly, Johnson's view was once more Byronic, for in December 2021 a speech he gave to the Oxford Union in 1986 was unearthed:

> The Elgin marbles should leave this northern whisky-drinking guilt-culture, and be displayed where they belong: in a country of bright sunshine and the landscape of Achilles, 'the shadowy mountains and the echoing sea,' [. . .]. Manipulating Turkish dependence on Britain for military support, he secured from the Sultan a firman to remove 'qualche pezzi di pietra' – a few pieces of stone – that happened to be lying about on the Acropolis [. . .]. Elgin's interpretation of this phrase was liberal to say the least.[32]

[30] Helena Smith, 'Boris Johnson Rules Out Return of Parthenon Marbles to Greece', *The Guardian*, 12 March 2021, www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2021/mar/12/boris-johnson-rules-out-return-of-parthenon-marbles-to-greece [accessed 16 March 2023].

[31] *Memorandum on the Subject of the Earl of Elgin's Pursuits in Greece* (London: Miller, 1811), p. 48.

[32] Helena Smith, 'Boris Johnson's Zeal to Return Parthenon Marbles Revealed in 1986 Article', *The Guardian*, 18 December 2021, www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2021/dec/18/boris-johnsons-zeal-to-return-parthenon-marbles-revealed-in-1986-article [accessed 16 March 2023]. The quotation is from Homer's *Iliad*, trans. Richmond Lattimore (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1951; repr. 2011), I.157 (p. 79).

The application of the law, as Johnson shows, is always an act of interpretation. Johnson shifted between the two interpretations of Mediterranean inheritance that framed the appropriation of the Marbles: that voiced by Byron (Johnson in 1986) and that of the *Edinburgh Review* and the *Annals of the Fine Arts* (Johnson in 2021).[33]

Conclusion: Hervey, Homer, Ireland, and Ickworth

Had Keats not looked into Chapman's Homer from 1616 he might have read the most influential edition of his own day: Flaxman's Homer (Fig. 1.2). The volume became known as Flaxman's not because he translated it, but because he illustrated it.[34] Piroli's engravings of Flaxman's drawings were accompanied by relevant lines from Pope's translations, which were subordinated to Flaxman's images. Flaxman was the foremost classicist of his day. He was a sculptor who had trained in Rome under the neoclassical maestro Antonio Canova, and the esteem in which he was held was such that he was a crucial player in the British government's decision to purchase the Parthenon sculptures. Flaxman was one of the first people to view them in London, as he was consulted about their restoration. His praise for them was such that he declared lauded Roman works such as the Apollo Belvedere and the Laocoon – on which his own reputation had been partially founded – to be far inferior to 'the hand of Phidias', the fifth-century BC Greek sculptor responsible for the Parthenon Marbles.[35] Flaxman and his wife had departed England for Italy in 1797, funded by his former employer Sir Josiah Wedgwood.[36] He meant to stay only a couple of years, but Canova arranged a meeting between Flaxman and Frederick Hervey, who commissioned a substantial

[33] By December 2023 Anglo-Greek discussions of the Parthenon marbles had collapsed into ignominy after the British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak cancelled a meeting with his Greek counterpart Kyriakos Mitsotakis at the last minute and noted that any loan to Greece of the artefacts would require acknowledgement of Britain's ownership of them. As Marina Prentoulis noted, both Sunak and Mitsotakis are using the marbles as part of their right-wing nationalist agendas. See 'Is Rishi Sunak Using the Parthenon Marbles as a Distraction? Perhaps – but So Are the Greeks', *The Guardian*, 1 December 2023, doi: www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/dec/01/the-parthenon-marbles-row-is-about-nationalist-politics-the-sculptures-are-just-a-facade [accessed 7 December 2023].

[34] See *Flaxman: la difusión del modelo clásico;Homero, Esquilo, Hesiodo, Dante* [exhibition catalogue] (Madrid: Calcografía Nacional, Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, 1995), and R. N. Essick and J. La Belle (eds.), *Flaxman's Illustrations to Homer* (New York: Dover, 1977).

[35] St Clair, *Lord Elgin and His Marbles*, p. 162.

[36] Flaxman was supported by sending designs to Wedgwood from Rome. See Sarah Symmons, 'John Flaxman (1755–1826)', in Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (Oxford University Press, 2004), doi: https://doi-org.uea.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/9679 [accessed 16 March 2023].

free-standing marble group that would prove to be 'one of the most important and influential to be produced in the late eighteenth century'.[37] This piece, *The Fury of Athamas* (1790–4; Fig. 1.3), was first housed in Hervey's house in Ballyscullion, but was subsequently moved to the Earl-Bishop's Suffolk home – Ickworth House. Ickworth was begun in 1795 by Francis Sandys following designs by Mario Asprucci, who with his father Antonio had landscaped and designed a number of features of the Villa Borghese in Rome.[38] Sandys and his brother Joseph had been responsible for the construction of Hervey's house in Ballyscullion (1787–1803). Following the 4th Earl's death in 1803, Ickworth was completed in the 1820s for the 5th Earl. However, the giant friezes, which detail scenes from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, had been part of the 4th Earl's original design. They were carried out by the Carabelli brothers, who had worked on Milan Cathedral. The model for their designs was Flaxman's Homer; their style of external frieze was surely indebted to the newly exhibited Parthenon Marbles.

In both of these narratives we find a shared set of circumstances and traditions that illustrate the persistent narrative of Britain's Mediterranean inheritance, an inheritance that is predicated upon cultural appropriation and the establishment of national identity, and underpinned by colonialism. The myth of Britain as the product of the Trojan diaspora in Geoffrey of Monmouth, reiterated by the Gawain-poet, is a means of granting legitimacy to Norman imperial ambitions in the Mediterranean and beyond. Monmouth's account of the early British king Cadwallader's eradication of the indigenous people of Britain – a monstrous race of giants – is echoed by Gerald of Wales's justification of Norman colonialism in Ireland: 'They are a wild and inhospitable people. They live on beasts only, and live like beasts. [. . .] This people is, then, a barbarous people, literally barbarous.'[39] Indeed, Gerald of Wales – one of the Geraldines, a powerful Norman family that helped lead the invasion of Ireland – cites Geoffrey of Monmouth (*The History of the Kings of Britain*, III.12) as justification for the colonial enterprise: 'As the British history relates [. . .] it is clear that Ireland can with some right be claimed by the kings of Britain, even though the claim be from olden times.'[40] It was this

[37] Ibid.
[38] See Susanna Pasquali, *Mario Asprucci: Neoclassical Architecture in Villa Borghese, 1786–1796* (Rome: Edizioni del Borghetto, 2018).
[39] Gerald of Wales, *The History and Topography of Ireland*, trans. John J. O'Meara (London: Penguin, 1982), pp. 101–3.
[40] Ibid., p. 99.

twelfth-century Anglo-Norman invasion that established English rule in Ireland. As much as the Earl-Bishop of Derry sympathized with the cause of Irish enfranchisement and supported the Catholic Committee, and allegedly preferred his Irish home to his English – which aroused the suspicions of the English government – his Mediterranean-inspired building projects at Downhill and Ballyscullion that served as exemplars for Ickworth were founded on colonial privilege; as Gerard O'Brien notes, the Bishopric of Derry was worth £7,000 a year as part of 'the lucrative ladder of Irish preferment'.[41] The language used in the *Annals* to justify the taking of the sculptures – 'Rescuing the Splendid Remains [. . .] from the / Hands of Barbarians' – regurgitated the early colonial language of the Anglo-Norman invasion – 'a barbarous people' who 'live like beasts' – which in turn was co-extensive with the language used to distinguish Mediterranean Christendom from Mediterranean *hethenesse*. There is a transfer of colonial discourse whereby Britain's later sense of its arrogated Mediterranean endowment employs the earlier tropes of Otherness: the Greeks in failing to protect their cultural heritage resemble Gerald's dehumanised Irish who fail to exploit their natural resources (III.93).[42] Even those who, like Byron, reviled Elgin's enterprise resorted to this discourse.[43] The discourse is maintained today. Gerald of Wales asserted that dominion of Ireland 'can with some right be claimed by the kings of Britain, *even though the claim be from olden times*', just as Johnson affirmed that 'the UK government has a firm longstanding position on the sculptures, which is that they were legally acquired by Lord Elgin *under the appropriate laws of the time*' (emphases added). The violence and exploitation of the original action are elided by historical distance, rendering seizure or appropriation benign, whereby custodianship becomes inheritance. In claiming part or parts of the Mediterranean, the British imagination lays claim to the whole. The Mediterranean of Greek and Latin antiquity was colonized, made British, by the seizing of its parts, which became 'the shadow[s] of a magnitude' that was itself overshadowed by a new empire.

[41] Gerard O'Brien, 'Frederick Augustus Hervey, Fourth Earl of Bristol (1730–1803)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), doi: https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/13111 [accessed 16 March 2023].

[42] 'They have not progressed at all from the primitive habits of pastoral living. [. . .] The wealth of the soil is lost, not through the fault of the soil, but because there are no farmers to cultivate even the best land' (Gerald of Wales, *The History and Topography of Ireland*, pp. 101–2).

[43] See Esterhammer, 'Translating the Elgin Marbles', p. 34.