

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

### Part 4

---

# Classical reception as the gateway between Classics and disability studies

*Ellen Adams*

---

This volume began by exploring the voice of the forgotten othered, be it patient or person with impairment, and the challenges of articulating subjective experiences. Turning full circle, it returns to these themes, but with the added dimension of imagined stories and distorted dialogues between antiquity and modernity. These illusions, filters, and tensions generate a cognitive dissonance, whereby accounts of myriad and occasionally contradictory experiences present themselves simultaneously. Reality and representation do not sit at opposing ends of a spectrum, but rather fold into each other to produce the messiness of perception – including, and perhaps especially, that of the human body.

Modern western societies have established clear boundaries between the categories of myth, religion, historic past, and increasingly secular present. But these were blurred in antiquity: Greek myths shaped religion, while the present was overseen by a squabble of interfering and unpredictable gods. Gods were real for the Greeks, as in any religion, but they were also reborn in representations – theatre, poetry, art. And classical reception plays a vital part here. For example, there is a certain irony in how the Enlightenment witnessed the development of the scientific classification that distances us from the classical world, while engaging very closely with ancient authorities in its education and culture, including its understanding of medical conditions and treatments and attitudes towards disabled people (see King's Chapter 10).

Both Hall and King consider how ancient Greece and Rome have been 'good to think with'. The ancient world is familiar from being filtered through the channels of classical reception, while also being exotic enough to whet curiosity. In Chapter 9, Hall explores Nicolas Poussin's landscape *Blind Orion Searching for the Rising Sun* (1658), depicting three disabled classical figures, Orion, Cedalion, and Hephaestus, united on a shared mission. King considers the nineteenth-century creation of Nydia, a blind flower girl at Pompeii, who stands as 'a way of enabling those with disabilities to make sense of their bodies and those without disability to empathise with others'. Empathy is the ultimate imagined reality and can work to positive and negative ends. The positive is obvious: a reaching out, understanding, and kindness. 'False empathy', however, comprises the hollow acknowledgement and appropriation of a

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

212 Ellen Adams

---

condition or situation, in order to evade dealing with the implications. ‘Oh, I know *exactly* what you mean’, is not an uncommon response to learning that someone is struggling in a particular environment, with the subtext being that, ‘yes, I know it’s hard, but if I can manage, so can you’.<sup>1</sup> Some misplaced empathy harms more than helps – much of the history of education for disabled people involves able-bodied people making the wrong assumptions with a colonial confidence. For example, a common assertion is that being impaired is overwhelmingly negative.

Both chapters consider the potential gain of disability, or the unforeseen advantages that dealing with impairments can produce. Hall explores how cooperation and mutual support can achieve shared goals perfectly well – each of the three figures, including blind Orion, contributing to the endeavour in their own way. King’s Nydia is able not only to walk through a pitch-black Pompeii as she is accustomed to navigating without sight, but she is also able to lead her sighted companions. Blind Gain has been explored as a phenomenon whereby the lack of sight enhances other senses or generates strategies that bear other advantages. From Helen Keller onwards, an assertive response to such impairments does not constitute denial, but a realistic acknowledgement of humankind’s ability for short-term adaptation. In considering blindness, both chapters explore text and image, which shape representations and construct realities in different ways. Classics has long explored the intermodal translation between the visual and the verbal (as ekphrasis – see Adams, Chapter 6, this volume), but here they serve as different tools used to explore perceptions of disability. And how visible the impairment itself is will clearly impact on such perceptions.

Dwarfism and club foot, as Hall explores, are visible conditions (some would say ‘deformities’) that do not necessarily indicate an inability to perform everyday activities. She considers literary sources of real or imagined symposia to reconstruct Greek perceptions of dwarfism – which may in turn flesh out the fragmentary profile of mythical Cedalion. He is not only able to work, but also constitutes a positive persona, as a tutor and contributor. What about invisible conditions, which may or may not have disabling consequences? If an impairment is not seen, then is it more difficult to perceive and understand? King charts the narrative of medical improvements in treatments for asthma, a hidden condition unless one is having an attack. This is an area that has seen continued medical advances, although its label of ‘practising how to die’ took on a heightened meaning in the age of Covid-19. She discusses whether Hippocrates merely described the symptoms or named the condition, and a global pandemic reminds us that such distinctions can matter (did people die *with* or *of* Covid?): knowledge is power in medicine, as elsewhere. But who sets the parameters of such knowledge?

The influence that ancient authorities have had in medical treatises and disability debates is difficult to explain. Presumably, most medics of a certain age started life with a good, solid classical education, which could be worn as a

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

Classical reception as the gateway 213

---

badge of honour for evermore. Hall investigates how historical authors have shaped our understanding of club foot, and King explores how medics are pleased to note that Hippocrates was right, and perhaps ahead of his time. The authority of the medic, noted in Part 1 of this volume, extends to that of the ancient author, providing a pleasing balance to the volume. And, if that authority is unsympathetic to certain ailments, then the consequences can be dire – as the grim misogyny behind the history of treating endometriosis illustrates (King’s Chapter 10).

Hall rethinks ancient myth through modern concerns, whereas King reframes modern medicine through its engagements with ancient representations. This tipsy-topsy juxtaposition highlights, and indeed celebrates, how varied and wide-ranging our engagement with the classical world can be. King suggests that the vivid portrayal of Nydia in art, opera, and song ‘almost’ renders her a real historical figure, and Hall exhorts that literature has the power to undermine and shape ideology by presenting a world ‘more politically advanced than the societies that produced them’. Specific to disability, this presents the sphere of representation as a forceful agent for social progressiveness. As such, classical representations have the power to go far beyond ‘being good to think with’ and can be deployed to enact real social change.

# T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

# T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

## Chapter 9

---

### **The immortal forgotten other gang**

Dwarf Cedalion, Lame Hephaestus, and  
Blind Orion

*Edith Hall*

---

#### **Abstract**

This article explores an ancient mythological narrative in which three disabled immortals unite in a quest. Lucian's *On the Hall* (28–29) describes a painting in which Orion, who has been blinded, carries the dwarf Cedalion on his shoulders. Cedalion directs him towards the sunlight that will restore his sight. Hephaestus, who is lame, watches them from his home island of Lemnos. This description inspired one of Nicolas Poussin's most famous classical landscapes, *Blind Orion Searching for the Rising Sun*. The myth of the three supernatural friends, disabled in different ways but mutually supporting one another, might reflect some aspect of the reality of the lives of disabled individuals in antiquity, or of medical procedures associated with Lemnos, or both. Although not claiming that the mythical narrative encapsulated in Lucian's ecphrasis has ever been previously interpreted, either in antiquity or more recently, as providing a positive representation of mutual self-help among disabled communities, my own interpretation springs from the premise that classical material needs to be open to new readings. If it can be reinterpreted from feminist, anti-racist, postcolonial, pro-youth, and anti-classist perspectives, why not from the perspective of 'the forgotten other'?

#### **Poussin's Lemnian Encounter**

One of Nicolas Poussin's most famous classical landscapes is *Blind Orion Searching for the Rising Sun*, which he painted for his Parisian patron, Michel Passart, in 1658. Passart was a scholarly individual, fond of arcane allusions to little-known classical texts. He will have been delighted that the inspiration for the painting was an ancient picture described as one ecphrasis among several in Lucian's *On the Hall* (28–9), written in the second half of the second century CE and much read by seventeenth-century art collectors (Cropper 1984, 169–72):

Orion, who is blind, is carrying Cedalion. Cedalion is showing him the way to the sunlight. The rising sun is healing the blindness of Orion, and Hephaestus views the incident from Lemnos.

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

216 Edith Hall

---

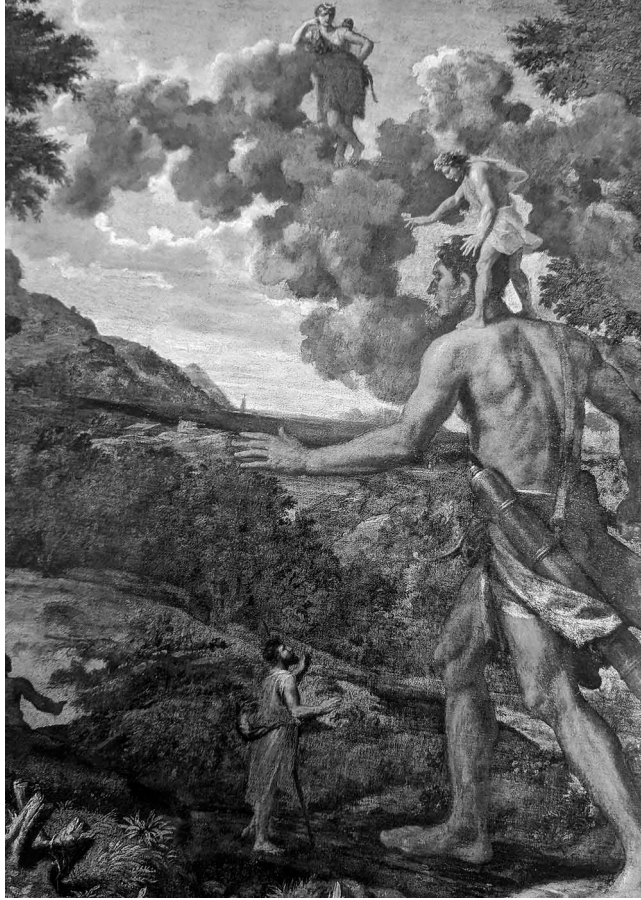


Figure 9.1 Nicolas Poussin (1658) *Blind Orion Searching for the Rising Sun* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, in public domain)

Now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the imposing landscape across which Orion strides was once owned by Joshua Reynolds; it inspired a rhapsodically admiring essay, penned by William Hazlitt, after he saw it in 1821 on display at the British Institution (Burlington 1944). Hazlitt (1824, 34) states:

He stalks along, a giant upon earth, and reels and falters in his gait, as if just awakened out of sleep, or uncertain of his way; – you see his blindness, though his back is turned. Mists rise around him, and veil the sides of the green forests; earth is dank and fresh with dews, the ‘gray dawn and the Pleiades before him dance,’ and in the distance are seen the blue hills and sullen ocean. Nothing was ever more finely conceived or done.<sup>1</sup>

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

The immortal forgotten other gang 217

---

The canonical reading of Poussin's picture these days, however, remains Ernst Gombrich's (1944). Noting that Poussin must have supplemented the Lucianic ephrasis with details from an account of the myth in a compendium of mythology of 1567 by the arch-euhemerist Natalis Comes (1976 [1567], vol. II, Book 8, 895), Gombrich argued that the painting was an allegory for nature itself: Orion represents something produced by the elements of water and air, along with the sun, watched over by Diana, the moon. The painting portrays 'the drama of the circulation of water in nature', and the storm cloud is 'Orion himself in his "real" esoteric meaning'. His blindness is a 'transitory phase which will be over when he has passed the mist and approached the rising sun' (Gombrich 1944, 41).

Gombrich's allegorical interpretation is widely accepted. It informs, for example, the information given on the painting on the Metropolitan Museum's website, which discusses its 'meteorological subtext'.<sup>2</sup> But, in a sensitive reappraisal, David Carrier (1990–1) points out that a central concern of Lucian's *On the Hall*, like so much ancient writing on ephrasis, is the rivalry between visual and verbal art, which in turn entails the comparison of the faculties of sight and hearing.<sup>3</sup> The painting defies the constraints of visual reality by collapsing vast distances (note the remote figures visible over Orion's arm). Orion's hand is stretching towards the place he will reach where his sight will be restored. And, in identifying this detail, the implied spectator of Poussin's painting is created. We look from somewhere high up on the hillside which Orion is descending. Poussin's Orion, in fact, suggests that vision is superior to speech. Speech may connect figures close to one another, but vision brings together what is near and far and enables viewers to locate themselves within the much larger narrative. Moreover, the painting 'corrects' the standard disadvantage of visual art, when compared with speech or writing, by the inclusion of Diana. She represents episodes within Orion's career subsequent to the Lemnos episode – in most accounts (see Fontenrose 1981 for citations and discussion) she is responsible for his death and sometimes for his katasterism: 'Poussin demonstrates that visual art has a power that literature lacks: a painting can simultaneously present several different stories' (Carrier 1990–1, 36).

Carrier's perception that the painting makes the viewer think about the relative advantages of sight and hearing is particularly suggestive given that the protagonist, Orion, has recently lost his sight and must listen to advice both from Hephaestus (clothed in blue, to the left of Orion's knees) and, presumably, the tiny Cedalion, perched on his shoulders to guide him. The angles of their heads suggest that Cedalion is at this very minute receiving verbal directions towards the rising sun from Hephaestus. Neer (2006–7, 337) points out that the location of the sun is unclear, and that the landscape with Orion thus 'invites the beholder to seek vainly for the sun and thereby to make the giant's dilemma his or her own'. But another way of thinking about this painting is that it brings together three ancient divinities who happened to have an impairment and shows them actively cooperating for the benefit of one of them.

# T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

218 Edith Hall

---

They happen to be doing so on the island of Lemnos, an island closely associated with certain medical practices and healing cults in antiquity. Theoris, the woman healer prosecuted for her use of drugs and incantations in fourth-century Athens, was a native of Lemnos (Dem. *Against Aristogeiton* 25.79–80). The red earth of Lemnos was a sought-after ingredient in medicines, collected by the local priestess of Artemis, mixed with goat's blood, made into small discs, and impressed with the seal of a goat (Pliny, *NH* 35.6; Galen, *de Antidotis* II, 1; Scribonius, *de Compositione medicamentorum liber* 120). This procedure may have been connected with the famous Lemnian purificatory fire festivals held in August (Burkert 1970, 10). The hill, Moschylos, on which the precious red soil was found, was an extinct volcano identified in cult with the fall of Hephaestus from Olympus. The earth was used as in antidotes to poison, emetics, and as a poultice for ulcers and the bites of venomous reptiles (see Hasluck 1909–10, 221). Some traditions held that Philoctetes, suffering from some gangrenous infection of his leg after a snake bite, was cured not at Troy, but on Lemnos, using the local earth (Philostratus, *Heroica* VI.2); in one version, the healer is Hephaestus's son Pylus (Photius's *Epitome* 190, summarising Ptolemy Chennus's *New History*).

It is certainly possible that the myth of the three supernatural friends, disabled in different ways but mutually supporting one another, may reflect some aspect of the reality of the lives of such individuals in antiquity, or of medical procedures associated with Lemnos, or both. This chapter explores the information ancient sources offer us about the three friends and their respective impairments; among them, only Hephaestus has received any serious attention from scholars interested in representations of disability.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, the sole discussion of the myth from a philological perspective makes no comment whatsoever on the shared feature of disability (Yoshida 1969). But I make no claim that the mythical narrative encapsulated in Lucian's ephrasis has ever been previously interpreted, either in antiquity or more recently, as providing a positive representation of mutual self-help among the disabled community. My own interpretation springs from the premise that classical material has always been, and always needs to be, open to new readings. If it can be reinterpreted from feminist, anti-racist, postcolonial, pro-youth, and anti-classist perspectives, why not, in the twenty-first century, from the perspective of 'the forgotten other'? I will return to this question in the conclusion.

## Cedalion

Aggravatingly little is known about Cedalion, the smith of restricted growth, except that Sophocles wrote a satyr play, *Cedalion*, about him (*TgrF* vol. IV, 328–333). We do not know whether this drama featured Orion, but it is most unlikely that it did not feature Hephaestus, as Cedalion has no life in ancient sources separate from his Olympian pupil. And Hephaestus was certainly a popular figure in satyr drama, as the satyrs traditionally assisted superior beings performing technological feats (see Hall (2006) 145–6, 156–8). Achaeus, the



## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

The immortal forgotten other gang 219

dramatist from Eretria famous for his satyr plays, composed a *Hephaestus*. In another Sophoclean satyr play, the satyrs participated in the invention of womankind. In a fragment of his *Pandora*, one individual, perhaps Hephaestus, possibly attended by Cedalion, is instructed by another to ‘begin to manipulate the clay in your two hands’ (fr. 482 *TgrF*). This leaves little doubt that Pandora, the first woman, was visibly constructed in the Athenian theatre, as she had been in Hesiod’s accounts (*Theog.* 578–89, *Op.* 60–82). Other evidence links the satyrs with Hephaestus in the role of his workmen, and Hephaestus was important in early comedy. Among the titles of the Sicilian Epicharmus, according to Aristotle, one of the inventors of comic plots (*Poetics* 5.1449b5) is a *Hephaestus* or *Komasts*. The comic poet named Alcaeus, of Mytilene, wrote a mythological burlesque comedy entitled *Ganymede*. It staged a comic version of the story of Ganymede; Zeus took Hephaestus to earth to help acquire Ganymede, rather than sending an eagle; the fragments suggest what now seems tasteless slapstick humour at the expense of Hephaestus’s limp (see Hall 2018, 383 and Storey 2011, fr. 3 [probably Zeus speaking]: ‘Lame one, hurry up, or you will be struck by lightning’).

Cedalion may have featured in some of these Hephaestus-centred satyr plays and comedies. The meagre literary sources relate that Cedalion came from Naxos. Shortly after Hephaestus was born, Hera had handed him over to Cedalion to care for him (as the root of the proper name, related to the verb *kēdō*, ‘care for’, implies). Cedalion was also commissioned to instruct the lame child in the arts of metalwork (Scholion on *Iliad* XIV.296 and Eustathius on *Iliad* XIV.294; see Vollkommer 1990). The appearance of a very small anthropomorphic figure on an important example among the many Athenian vases depicting the ‘Return of Hephaestus’ to Olympus may well have been assumed by any ancient viewer to be Cedalion (see Fig. 9.2). He walks along underneath Hephaestus’s donkey, holding the end of the donkey’s phallus so that the jug of wine whose handle is looped around the phallus cannot fall off and land on the floor.<sup>5</sup> In another, red-figure example, the very short satyr just in front of Hephaestus’s donkey in the procession may perhaps have been thought to be Cedalion.<sup>6</sup> In these two examples, if dwarfism is implied, it is ‘proportionate short stature’ (PSS), in which the body parts are in typical proportion to one another, rather than ‘disproportionate short stature’ (DSS), most cases of which are fundamentally caused by skeletal dysplasia.<sup>7</sup>

No ancient picture of Cedalion on Orion’s shoulders of the kind described by Lucian exists. But there are two depictions of Cedalion with Hephaestus in Roman art, sharing a similar iconography, which may imply that they both imitate a lost Hellenistic painting. It, in turn, may have been inspired by the Sophoclean satyr drama *Cedalion* (Welcker 1851, 158). One is a Pompeii wall painting in the Naples Museum (no. 9529), dated to around 70 CE (*LIMC* no.1).<sup>8</sup> Inside his workshop, Hephaestus sits on the left of the picture, opposite Thetis, and shows her Achilles’s shield. Cedalion sits beneath Hephaestus and hammers Achilles’s helmet. He wears a white pileus and a greenish loincloth. He hunches

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

220 Edith Hall

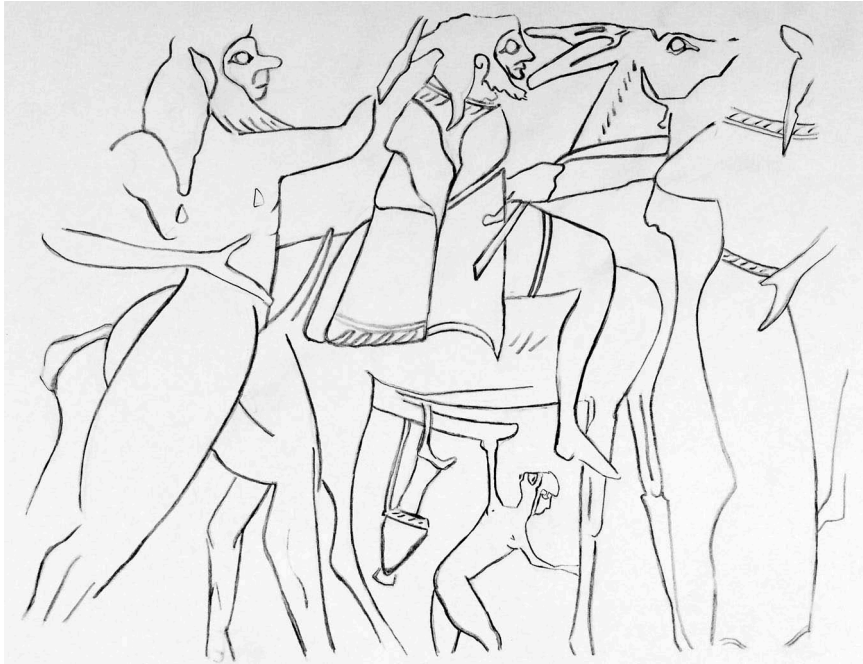


Figure 9.2 Drawing reproduced by kind permission of Becky Brewis. Based on black-figure kantharos in Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen ZV 1466 = LIMC 'Hephaestus' no. 142a

over his work, showing developed muscles. He is bearded, has very tanned skin, darker even than Hephaestus, and is stockier and shorter in overall stature than the other figures – perhaps half their height, although the body position make it difficult to tell. Otherwise, there are no noticeable physical differences between them, and it is not clear whether his small stature entails relative disproportion between the parts of his body. The other image is a marble relief sculpture of the first or second centuries CE in the Louvre (see Fig. 9.3). There is no Thetis here: Hephaestus receives the shield, as yet unengraved, from a satyr. But Cedalion sits in a similar position, on the lower left, working on Achilles's helmet. He is depicted in a similar way, with beard and loincloth, although a playful touch is added with a young satyr trying to make off with the serious-minded and much older dwarf's pileus.

Dwarfs were staples of the nineteenth-century 'freak show' and continue to exert something of a fascination in popular culture; in fantasy fiction, they are often invested with a degree of authority and social status and special powers of intellect, divination, or magic (Backstrom 2012, 687–8; Adelson 2005, 5). The figure of Tyrion Lannister in the HBO television series *Game of Thrones*, played by Peter Hayden Dinklage, is the most famous example. Cedalion, as

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

The immortal forgotten other gang 221

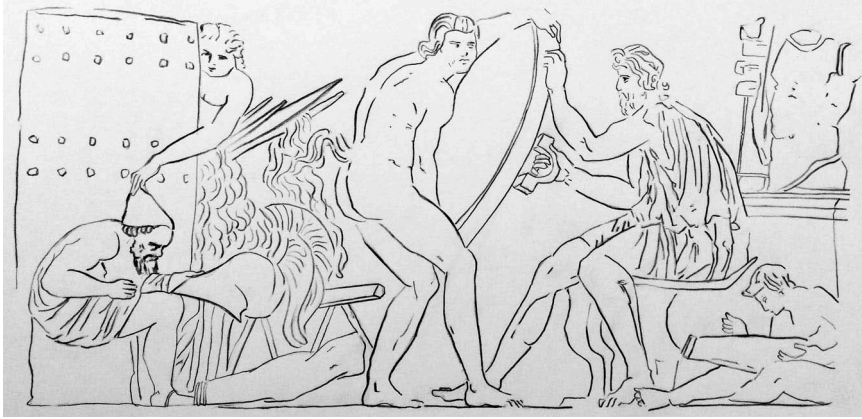


Figure 9.3 Drawing reproduced by kind permission of Becky Brewis. Based on marble relief sculpture in the Louvre, fr 109, LIMC no. 2

skilled craftsman, mentor, and companion to an Olympian god, seems to have been a forerunner of this type. In her 1993 study of dwarfs in ancient Egypt and Greece, Véronique Dasen sadly does not have an entry under ‘Cedalion’ in her index, although she has an interesting discussion of the Kerkopes, dwarfish and ape-like creatures who accosted travellers until Heracles captured them (Dasen 1993, 189–94). She shows that the terms *pugmaios* and *nanos* are usually used interchangeably and can mean both what we call ‘pygmy’ and what we call ‘dwarf’. But Aristotle distinguished mythical pygmies from a real ‘race of small people’ to be found ‘south of Egypt’ who live in caves (*History of Animals* 8.12: Dasen 1993, 175–88).

Of more relevance to Cedalion are the beings Dasen (1993, 194–204) discusses in a section on Hephaestus and ‘Small Demons’. Hephaestus is associated with several pairs or groups of (conventionally speaking) unattractive male supernatural beings who lived underground or in caves and shared his skills in metalwork. His sons, the Kabeiroi, lived in Lemnian caves and oversaw ecstatic mystery rites on Samothrace. Their small stature is at least implied by Herodotus’s account of the Egyptian smith-god Ptah, who was identified with Hephaestus and depicted as a dwarf, as were the Egyptian equivalents of the Kabeiroi (2.37). Another term for the Kabeiroi, according to the *Suda*, was *Karkinoi*, or ‘crabs’, which may have had something to do with the identification of a crab’s pincers with a smith’s tongs (Detienne 1970; Detienne and Vernant 1978, 269–70); some of the terms used to describe Hephaestus’s lameness (see below) are also found in association with a crab in *The Palatine Anthology*, 6.196.<sup>9</sup> The Kabeiroi were held by Diodorus Siculus (5.64.4) originally to have been Dactyls, another species of supernatural smiths, found in Phrygia, Rhodes, and Crete. They seem to have been imagined as very small. In

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

222 Edith Hall

---

a sanctuary of Demeter in Megalopolis, Arcadia, Pausanias says that he saw a statue of Demeter about 15 feet high, with an Idaean Dactyl beside her who was only about a cubit (less than 2 feet) beside her (8.31.2–3).

Both Cedalion and Hephaestus share many of such beings' characteristics: they are smiths, work in caverns, are associated with Phrygia and the islands, and are little. The short stature may also have been associated with lameness where lower legs had not developed as expected (Dasen 1993, 198). Yet this evidence leaves us very little better informed about Cedalion, our sole individually named semi-divine dwarf smith of the Aegean islands. His existence in mythical narratives may reflect the kind of work from which boys with restricted growth, like boys with club foot or any other impairment of the lower limbs, might be expected to make a living in the ancient Mediterranean world. Both the Cedalion stories – his tutelage of Hephaestus and his assistance of Orion – suggest a responsible, helpful, and avuncular figure of ready wits as well as advanced skills in metalwork. This may chime with some interpretations of the representations of dwarfs in ancient Egyptian art – for example, a group of five ivory figurines from Predynastic times in the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, Maryland. Kozma (2010, 2556) has argued that these and representations of the Egyptian dwarf gods, Bes and Ptah, support 'the premise that dwarfs were accepted and integrated in the ancient Egyptian society, and with a few exceptions, their disorder was not depicted as a physical handicap [*sic*]'.

But, in the context of the less than sympathetic depictions of dwarfs in other Greek and Roman writing and iconography, the apparently positive persona and images of Cedalion as Hephaestus's tutor and Orion's benefactor seem exceptional and, therefore, surprising. As Nicole Kelley has shown, Greek vases show dwarfs alongside hunchbacks and physically impaired individuals performing in entertainments intended to elicit derisive laughter. Augustus's granddaughter Julia kept a pet dwarf by the name of Cinopas (Pliny *NH* 7.74–5). But it is not clear that dwarfs were regarded as freakishly monstrous: they are not included in Plutarch's list of the 'monsters' that could be purchased at special markets – people 'who have no calves, or are weasel-armed, or have three eyes, or ostrich-heads', at the sight of whom even the really curious person will soon 'have had enough and start to feel nauseous' (*de Curiositate*, ch. 10). Nor is dwarfism specified when Horace describes a banquet entertainment in which two deformed men traded abuse (*Satires* 1.5.50–70), or in Aelius Lampridius's account of the emperor Elagabalus's party, to which he invited groups of bald, one-eyed, gout-suffering or deaf men to dinner to arouse laughter (*Life of Heliogabalus* 29.3: Kelley 2007, 39–40; see further Stevenson 1975).

On the other hand, one 'miniature man' (*anthrōpiskos*) at another symposium, described by Lucian, was employed as a comic performer. The symposium is fictional, attended by various deceased intellectuals. Aristaenetos brings in the jester he either owns or has hired, by the name of Satyrion,

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

The immortal forgotten other gang 223

---

a hideous fellow, his head shaven and only a few hairs standing up dead straight right on his crown. He danced in a disjointed and distorted way, which made him seem more ridiculous. He thought up some anapaests which he delivered in an Egyptian accent, and finished by cracking some jokes against the guests.

*Symposium* (18)

One of them, Alcidas, resented the witty, resourceful jester's success in capturing everyone's attention and challenged him to a bout of *pankration*, but conceded victory to his tougher – although much smaller – adversary (19).

### Hephaestus

Satyron's adeptness at producing laughter and holding his own against able-bodied antagonists is shared by Hephaestus, the dwarf Cedalion's ward and student, and the only disabled fully-fledged Olympian god.<sup>10</sup> As we shall see below, he is occasionally portrayed himself as of exceptionally diminutive stature, implying that he and his teacher were so closely identified as to be almost indistinguishable in some contexts. But his prominence in literature and cult, and the far greater interest in lameness than in dwarfism in ancient medical sources, mean that there is much more to say about him than about Cedalion.

What was Hephaestus's impairment? In archaic art, he is often portrayed with floppy lower legs, and feet and ankles incorrectly aligned with his shins and calves, riding a donkey – for example, on the colourful Caeretan hydria of about 525 BCE, now in the Vienna Kunsthistorisches Museum (3577).<sup>11</sup> One epithet used for him in Homer is *amphiguēis* (e.g. *Iliad* 1.607 and *Od.* 8.300). But scholars are undecided as to its meaning. It is sometimes translated as 'ambidexterous', implying that he was unusually capable in both arms. But sometimes it was explained in antiquity as meaning 'lame in both legs' (see Deroy 1956). Neither explanation is helpful in terms of his precise condition. The only informative epithet is *kullopodiōn*, or 'with bent feet', as the stem *kull-* precisely corresponds with the technical terms used to describe club feet in the Hippocratic *de Articulis*, usually assumed to be a late fifth- or early fourth-century work.

Club foot, technically labelled congenital talipes equinovarus (CTEV), is a congenital musculoskeletal condition that occurs once in about a thousand live births. It makes the ankle look as though it has been bent inwards, so that the person appears to walk on their outside ankles or sides of their feet. It is not usually related to any other impairment. It occurs at double the rate in males as in females. In half of all cases it is bilateral, affecting both feet. There is believed to be an inheritable predisposition to club foot, although this is still the subject of intensive chromosomal research.

There are two passages in the Hippocratic *On Joints* that discuss club foot. In the first, it is treated as a sub-species of lameness, signified by the stem *chōl-*.

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

224 Edith Hall

---

The adjective *chōlos* also occurs in Homer, being used of Thersites, who was ‘lame in one leg’ (*Il.* 2.217), and who is the butt of the laughter of the Achaean soldiers, as well as of the personified Prayers or *Litai* (*Il.* 9.503) and of Hephaestus himself (*Od.* 8.300). In the first passage, the Hippocratic writer has heard the story that the Amazons deliberately dislocate their sons’ knees or hips when they are infants in order to make them lame and thus prevent any male conspiracy against their matriarchy: ‘they used them as artisans to perform any sedentary work, such as that of a shoemaker or smith’ (*On Joints* 53). The author then uses the verb *kulloein* to explain the consequences of such dislocations: ‘The legs (*gounata*) are more bandied (*kulloutai*) when the dislocation is outward, but it is nevertheless easier for the possessor of outward-turning club foot to stand on his feet than if the legs are turned inwards’.

But the person with congenital club foot (the *kullos*), in whom the ankle is naturally present and the leg bones are not atrophied, is likely to be able to walk; the club-footed person is thus distinguished from someone who becomes acutely lame through injury. Later, in part 62, the author insists that,

most cases of congenital club-foot are remediable, unless the declination is very great, or when the condition occurs at an advanced period of youth. The best plan, then, is to treat such cases at as early a period as possible, before the deficiency of the bones of the foot is very great, and before there is any great wasting of the flesh of the leg.

There is more than one variety of club foot, the author continues. Most of them are not complete dislocations, but impairments connected with the habitual maintenance of the limb in a certain position. Treatment consists of putting pressure on the bones of the legs and feet so they begin to grow or move into correct alignment, as a wax-worker moulds an object. Pressure is applied by plaster made from wax and resin, compresses, bandages and soles of soft leather or lead, which are stitched in place, and then an outer shoe or boot of lead. ‘The most suitable are (those calf-length boots) which are called “mud-treaders” because they are used for travel on muddy ground; for this kind of shoe does not yield to the foot, but the foot yields to it.’ Hephaestus’s condition could have been treated by manipulation, orthotic bandaging, and stiff, structured footwear functioning as a splint.

One scene in Aristophanes makes fun of a man who I think was visually represented as club-footed – Cinesias, the dithyrambic poet in Aristophanes’ *Birds*. Cinesias enters, and sings, ‘On my light pinions I soar off to Olympus; in its capricious flight my Muse flutters along the thousand paths of poetry in turn’, and most of his words consist of further ethereal poetry of this nature. But Peisetairos suggests that it would be difficult to get Cinesias off the ground at all (1375): ‘This is a fellow will need a whole shipload of wings’. In his next retort he addresses Cinesias as the ‘lime-wood man’ and says that he is doing something circular with his club foot (1377–8):

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

The immortal forgotten other gang 225

---

Welcome, Cinesias, you lime-wood man!  
Why have you come here twisting your club foot in circles?

He is chased from the stage. But the adjective *philurinos* is suggestive, given that Galen says that lime wood was used for medical splints (*Comm. On Hipp. Fractures* 18B.505k, *ek philirou*). I wonder whether *kullos*-legged Cinesias does not wear heavy splints, with which he draws dithyrambic circles in the soil of Cloudcuckooland.

The earliest mention of Hephaestus's impairment in the surviving literary tradition occurs during the Olympian council that closes the first book of the *Iliad*. Hephaestus is not explicitly said to be lame, but he reminds his mother, Hera, that resistance against Zeus is hopeless; once before he had tried to support her against Zeus, but Zeus had picked him up by the leg and hurled him down to Lemnos in retaliation. Now he serves the Olympians with their beverages (1.597–600): 'But he drew sweet nectar from the mixing-bowl and served it in cups to the other gods, moving left to right; and inextinguishable laughter arose amongst the blessed gods when they saw Hephaestus *poipnuonta* through the halls'. Hephaestus is an object of laughter not here specifically because he is lame, but because he is *poipnuonta*. This word is used of any kind of *servile* labour or effort, such as domestic cleaning; it is used of Hephaestus's own robotic metal maidservants when they help him move round his Olympian home (*Iliad* 18.421). It may well be that the reason the gods laugh is the contrast with the graceful service they are accustomed to from the beautiful Ganymede, as pointed out by a scholiast (scholion bT on line 584). But it is difficult to see how the audience does not think of Hephaestus's club foot, the image of which must have been insinuated by his own reference to how Zeus had picked him up by the leg a few lines previously.

Rinon argues that the presentation of Hephaestus in both Homeric epics is distinctively tragic. The reasons Rinon (2006, 18–19) gives are that he is portrayed in both epics as a god endowed with unusually human characteristics:

Afflicted in body and limited in movement, suffering pain and humiliation, bound by human institutions such as marriage and divorce, and laughing stock of the other gods, he is unique among the Olympians in his humanized characterization. His unique status is used for dramatic effect, for this humanized god serves as a figure whose tragic depth is otherwise unavailable to immortals, one of whose main characteristics is a 'lofty levity' that often enables them to deride and mock the agonies of mortals. In the *Iliad*, Hephaestus' tragic awareness finds its most brilliant expression in his creation of the shield of Achilles, where his engravings reveal his humane perspective on the human lot. In the *Odyssey*, his betrayal serves as an emblem of the miseries of mortals and as a reminder of the ineradicable chasm between humans and gods. Despite differences between the epics, the portrayal of this exceptional god serves the poet in both cases as a means to

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

226 Edith Hall

---

represent a tragic perception of the human condition which is marked by pain and suffering.

I fear that this is to impose a twenty-first-century liberal, humanist view of deformity and ugliness on these texts, where pathos and what seems to us cruel laughter at the expense of disability can surely exist side by side. Rinon's reading does not take into account the subsequent close relationship between Hephaestus and the comic in both art and literature (explored at length in Hall 2018).

In *Iliad* Book 18, we finally learn that Hephaestus was *born* lame and was, therefore, disabled long before Zeus's punitive assault. When Thetis arrives at Hephaestus's house, she is received by his wife, Charis. From his workshop, he calls out to them that Thetis saved him when he fell from Olympus because his mother wanted to hide him on account of his lameness. Thetis and the Oceanid Eurynome had looked after him in their cave for 9 years, and he had forged pieces of jewellery there. We then receive the fullest description of his appearance and gait, which twice uses the verb *chōleuein* ('limp' or 'hobble'; *Iliad* 18.410–21):

He spoke and rose from the anvil, an enormous, panting figure, limping, but his slim legs moved deftly beneath him. He placed the bellows away from the fire, collected all the tools he had been working with in a silver chest, and wiped his face and both arms and his thick neck and hairy chest with a sponge. He put on a tunic, and clasped a thick staff, and went limping towards the door; and his maidservants, made in gold to resemble living maidens, sped to support their master. They have intelligent minds, and speech and strength and they understand what to do from the immortal gods. And they served their master by supporting him.

This scene does not mention any laughter in response to Hephaestus's appearance, although it does mention his mother's desire to conceal him because of his lameness. This is the version retold by Hera herself in the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* (316–18), where she brutally declares that she had cast him into the sea because he was born ugly and with a shrivelled leg. Perhaps the ancient audiences of the *Iliad* found the image of his sweat, his powerful upper body on his spindly legs, and his robot assistants more amusing than have people in more recent times.<sup>12</sup>

Hephaestus, intellectually, is easily the equal of the other Olympians, however. He can maintain his position among them by use of skill, cunning, and his ability to engender laughter. In the *Odyssey*, the smith-god metamorphoses from object of ridicule to mastermind of a comic spectacle. Demodocus sings the 'Lay of Ares and Aphrodite', about the adulterous affair of the gods. Helios informs Hephaestus, who goes to his smithy, 'pondering evil deep in his heart' (273). He makes a trap of bonds to bind his wife and her lover, hangs the trap



## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

The immortal forgotten other gang 227

---

from his bed-posts and the roof above them, and pretends to leave for Lemnos. Ares and Aphrodite seize their apparent opportunity, but are soon held fast in Hephaestus's snare. He returns, again tipped off by Helios. Now, in fierce anger and a terrible voice (304–5), he calls on Zeus and the other gods to witness what has happened (306–12):

Father Zeus, and you other blessed gods who are forever, come here to see something laughable and intolerable. Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus, scorns me because I am lame and loves destructive Ares because he is beautiful and strong-limbed, whereas I was born feeble. Yet nobody is to blame for this except my two parents. I wish they had never conceived me!

He says that he expects the return of all the gifts he gave to Aphrodite's father when he wooed her. The male gods come to his house – Poseidon and Hermes and Apollo. The goddesses do not come out of shame, but the other gods stand in his gateway, and unquenchable laughter (326) arises among them when they see the crafty trick of Hephaestus. They agree that Ares owes a penalty. Poseidon pleads with Hephaestus to release Ares, who, he says, will pay the right recompense in front of the gods; in any case, he, Poseidon, will personally see to it that Hephaestus receives his due compensation. Hephaestus now agrees and releases the two lovers, who depart to Thrace and Paphos, respectively.

Hephaestus, by coming out better in the incident through deploying cunning and skill rather than physical strength and beauty, provides (as so often in the poem) a parallel with its hero, Odysseus (Newton 1987). Hephaestus stages a comic spectacle. But this is not just gentle humour: Hephaestus is dishonoured, angry, and *using* laughter in order to gain respect, public recognition that he has been grievously wronged, and that he is entitled to compensation. Poseidon, at least, is aware that the incident is a major threat to the stability of Olympian society and guarantees that Hephaestus will be compensated. Hephaestus can never win in a competition based on beauty or physique. But he can use his technological skill plus humour to protect his status in the community and counter-attack when he is insulted. Hephaestus here uses *aischrologia* laughter as an instrument of social justice (Brown 1989, 292).

If we had more than mere fragments of those precious archaic texts that told of his other famous technological ruse – designing a chair in which to imprison his mother, Hera – we would know much more about how Hephaestus could use comic spectacle in order to wreak revenge against one who had abused and insulted him, and to effect his own reinstatement as a god who deserved the respect of the Olympians, however ugly, disabled, and banausic he may have been. These lost texts are the Homeric *Hymn* to Dionysus quoted by Diodorus 3.66.3 (fragments of which have been edited by West 2001), a hymn by Alcaeus, and a poem by Pindar (Alcaeus fr. 349a–e Voigt; Pindar fr. 283 Snell-Maehler). 'Hera Bound by Her Son' constituted a popular and well-known myth. This is clear from Plato's *Republic* 2.378d, where it earns special disapprobation, along

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

228 Edith Hall

with the other Hephaestus story in which it is Zeus who hurls him from Olympus. They are, says Socrates, the sorts of story that must not be told to children because they provide examples of conflict between the Olympians.

The story was retold in several later sources (e.g. Paus. 1.20.3; ps.-Libanius, *Narr.* 30. 1; Hyg. *Fab.* 166; Serv. *auct. Ecl.* 4.62) and depicted on an Apulian amphora now in Foggia (see Fig. 9.4). Hephaestus, intriguingly, is himself depicted as stocky and of dwarfish size and arguably disproportionate body parts, as if he shared his tutor Cedalion's dwarfism (although the vase-painting may imply that, in one version of the story, he sent his mentor to release Hera in his place: see also Dasen 1993, 198). The story's outlines, as summarised by West (2001, 3), are these: from Lemnos, where Hera had hurled him in disgust, Hephaestus



Figure 9.4 Drawing reproduced by kind permission of Becky Brewis. Based on Apulian amphora in Foggia, *LIMC* no. 126

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

The immortal forgotten other gang 229

sent his mother a fine throne, in which he had incorporated a secret mechanism. When she sat down in it, she found herself trapped. None of the other gods was able to free her. It was clear that Hephaestus had to be induced to come back and undo what he had done. Ares undertook to go and fetch him by force. He went off, but failed to achieve his object, because Hephaestus defended himself with fire, which Ares could not face. Then Dionysus went equipped with wine, made Hephaestus drunk, and brought him back to Olympus in jolly mood, riding on a donkey or mule. He set Hera free, and she rewarded Dionysus by persuading the other Olympians to admit him to their number.

Hephaestus made a laughing-stock of Hera, and possibly of Ares, before joining Dionysus in the aboriginal divine *kōmos*, the first comic revel on Olympus.

The archaic evidence prompts further questions. First, had Hephaestus always been associated with the idea of obscene comic abuse, whether the satire of the archaic iambic poets or the insults delivered by members of the *kōmos* during Dionysiac festivals? There may be a special connection between aischronologic abuse and Hephaestus's club feet. In a tantalising line, the Hellenistic mimiambist Herodas claims Hipponax as his own poetic ancestor, and in doing so claims expertise in iambs and in the 'limping' or 'clubfooted' metre (8.75–9). He avers that he shares with Hipponax of old 'the ability to sing limping songs', and here uses the rare *kull*-stem of the choliambic metre (*ta kull' aeidein*), which reminds us of the *kull*-footed god of the *Iliad*. Hipponax, like Hephaestus, also used his technical skill, even if as a poet rather than as a smith, to extract revenge for public humiliation. According to a scholion on Horace's *Epodes*, there was a tradition that Hipponax wanted to marry the daughter of Bupalus, a painter of Clazomenae. He was despised because he was deformed, and Bupalus made a portrait of him looking hideous (in one version displaying the picture at the Panathenaea: Scholiast on Horace *Epodes* 6.11ff. (test. 9b Degani)) in order to make the viewer laugh. Hipponax got his revenge by attacking him so cruelly in his poetry that Bupalus hanged himself (Scholiast on Horace *Epodes* 6.11ff. (test. 9a Degani)).

The notion of limping or faltering gait also has something to do with the distinctive *skazon* or *choliambic* metre of invective poetry, which Hipponax had supposedly invented. This is an iambic senarius, but with a thumping spondee or trochee, two long syllables, replacing the final iambus. There is a suggestive description of what Hipponax achieved thereby in Demetrius of Phalerum's *de Elocutione* 301:

In his desire to abuse his enemies he shattered the metre, making it lame instead of straightforward, and unrhythmical, i.e. suitable for vigorous abuse, since what is rhythmical and pleasing to the ear would be more suitable for words of praise than blame.

The very form of abuse poetry was, therefore, felt by the ancient Greeks to be somehow *de*-formed in a way that suggested the lopsided body and the

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

230 Edith Hall

---

distorted, uneven rhythm of the gait of a person with a limp. And the most instantly recognisable lame individual in their mythology was none other than club-footed Hephaestus.

The evidence in the archaic literary sources for Hephaestean laughter is here complicated by the visual depiction of lame carousers on many Corinthian black-figure pots, which some scholars have even argued represent a retinue of Hephaestus, or even a guild or ritual group of dancers all representing the smith-god, plural *Hephaistoi* (see e.g. Smith 2009). Another possibility, which I find more plausible, is that the club-footed god was drawn into a pre-existing tradition of deformed entertainers and bizarre phallic dances at Corinthian symposia. He first certainly joins the lame revels on a Middle Corinthian pot from the first quarter of the sixth century,<sup>13</sup> although the association might of course antedate this vase. But the wealth of visual evidence for lame dancers on archaic Corinthian pots has laid the playing field wide open for speculation here, like almost everything else to do with Greek entertainment in the sixth century BCE.

### Orion

The scanty ancient sources on Orion tell us much less about the experience of being blind in antiquity than texts relating to other sightless figures – for example, Oedipus or Tiresias (well discussed in Bernidaki-Aldous 1990). But many more people may have identified with his experience than that of Cedalion or Hephaestus, as there were probably far more blind or partially sighted people in ancient populations than individuals with restricted growth or lameness. The cases where people had sought divine assistance for damaged eyesight among those recorded at the Athenian Asclepieion and in the Epidaurus stelai are more numerous than cases of any other malady, although none of them was treated by looking directly into the rising sun (Horn 2013, 123–4).

Lisa Trentin points out, however, that certain aspects of ancient society, especially hand-to-hand combat without adequate helmet visors, in what were often semi-continuous wars, produced large numbers of men like Orion, blinded by injury in adulthood (Trentin 2013, 98–100). Gouging out of the eyes was also used as a punishment with some frequency, and so there will have been individuals in the ancient world who had experienced exactly the fate of Orion; rumours also circulate about miraculous restorations of vision parallel to the one he experienced (Trentin 2013, 100–4). Unlike Cedalion and Hephaestus, Orion is usually said to have been born a mortal, but an enormous one, with special powers as a hunter and the ability to wade through or walk on the deepest water. In the story of his blinding, almost certainly originating in Hesiod's *Ehoiai*, Orion had sexually assaulted Oenopion's daughter Merope on another eastern Aegean island, Chios. Consequently, Orion was blinded by Oenopion as a punishment before wandering on to Lemnos, where Hephaestus first pitied and then helped the blinded giant find a cure (Eratosthenes, *Catasterisms* 32; Hesiod Fr. 148a M.-W; Jackson 1997).

# T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

The immortal forgotten other gang 231

---

Blind people presumably often used slaves as guides, like the children who lead Tiresias on to the stage in Greek tragedy, but the exaggerated disparity in size between the gigantic Orion and dwarf Cedalion made possible the striking image of the guide perched on the blind man's shoulders, the dwarf's seeing eyes close to the giant's sightless ones, a perfect image of complementarity and cooperation.

## **Conclusion: repurposing antiquity**

The incident on Lemnos described by Lucian and painted by Poussin seems to have been unique in ancient mythology in furnishing an imaginary instance of a divine disabled support group. We shall probably never know whether anyone disabled in antiquity took comfort or inspiration from the story, or whether anyone able-bodied learned to respect the disabled more after hearing it. We can never be sure that Poussin recognised the potential importance of the theme of disability in the myth, although it is interesting that he painted this theme at the precise moment when he began to experience relentless tremors – perhaps Parkinson's disease – which seriously affected his ability to control his brushstrokes (Haggard and Rodgers 2000).

The unanswerable nature of these questions, however, hardly needs to prevent us from repurposing the story today. Poussin, after all, may himself have reinterpreted the myth of Orion as a nature allegory under the influence of the euhemeristic 'decoding' of classical mythology popular in his lifetime. In our time, the relentlessly patriarchal narratives of ancient myth and history have been systematically retold from the female viewpoint, by novelists and playwrights as well as scholars, since the 1970s, if not earlier (see Heilbrun 1990 [1985]; Hall 2008, 118–29). Anticolonial critiques and interpretations of ancient attitudes to ethnicity and slavery have fuelled intense creativity in anti-racist literature, art, and academic studies since the 1930s (see e.g. Greenwood 2010). Queer writing about and in response to antiquity is now abundant (see e.g. Clarke 2019). The lost voices of classical Athenian teenagers and young adults, destined for the battlefield or dangerously early childbirth, have been reclaimed (Shipton 2018). Even social class – long an 'ugly sister' within progressive Reception Studies – is beginning to be treated seriously by scholars, opening up possibilities for more class-conscious reworkings of ancient texts (Hall and Stead 2020). So why not adopt the meeting of Cedalion, Hephaestus, and Orion on Lemnos as an inspiration to scholars striving to use disability studies to deepen our understanding of ancient representations of the body?

Classical texts, such as Lucian's Lemnian ecphrasis, sometimes possess a transhistorical appeal that makes them seem eerily modern, and creative artists have adopted different metaphors to describe what they feel they are doing with the ancient material. The feminist poet Judith Kazantzis says that Homer's *Odyssey*, an epic of the high seas, 'is perennially open to plunder itself and I am a pirate' (Kazantzis 1999). The Marxist theatre director Peter Sellars, on the

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

232 Edith Hall

---

other hand, sees each classic text as an antique house that can be redecorated in the style of any era, while remaining essentially the same (quoted in Lahr 1993). The scholar Oliver Taplin (1989) proposes the more volatile image of Greek fire, a substance used as a weapon that burns under water. Greek culture, according to this analogy, is still present in invisible yet potentially incendiary forms. More ambivalent is Walcott's description, repeated in poems including *Omeros*, of 'All that Greek manure under the green bananas' (Walcott 1949, 15; see also Walcott 1990, 271); the Greek legacy is excrement, but has also fertilized his Caribbean imagination. This beautifully captures the paradoxical nature of ancient Mediterranean discourses to peoples colonized by Western powers, a paradox that must also affect disabled people, although for slightly different reasons and in different ways.

Various explanations have been proposed for the 'transhistorical' power of some ancient artefacts. Pierre Vidal-Naquet (1988, 361–80) argues that ancient literature transcends history because of its dialogic nature and unusual susceptibility to diverse interpretations. J.-P. Vernant (1988) further proposes that important artworks actively condition the shapes taken by future artworks, whether in imitation, adaptation, or reaction and rejection. Raymond Williams (1977, 120–7) would have suggested that this was in turn made possible by the ideological complexity of the original material, according to his notion that any moment in time contains three strands of ideology: old-fashioned ideas on their way out, dominant ideas that the majority of people hold, and emergent ideas developed only by avant-garde segments of the population that may not become mainstream for many centuries. On this argument, there are things in ancient culture – for example, the celebration of Penelope's intelligence in the *Odyssey*, the undermining of the clichéd ethnocentric polarisation of Greek and barbarian in some Greek tragedies, or the positive light in which the dwarf Cedalion and the lame Hephaestus aiding the blind Orion are presented in Lucian – that might not become dominant ideology for millennia.

Williams's concept of 'emergent' ideology partially corresponds with the Russian formalist Mikhail Bakhtin's (1986) notion that literature holds 'prefigurative' meanings that can only be released by reassessments lying far away in what he calls 'great time' in the future. Another way of putting this, more mystically, is Erich Auerbach's concept of 'figura' or 'umbra', which draws on medieval allegorists to develop a metaphor of 'prefiguration' or 'foreshadowing' (see his essay 'Figura' (1944) as translated by Ralph Manheim in Auerbach 1959, 11–76). According to this argument, an element in an ancient text (e.g. Odysseus's wanderings) can in a mysterious but profound manner prefigure things that happen later (Columbus's voyages of exploration). The concept of literature's 'utopian bent' is also useful. From our twenty-first-century perspective, the patriarchal, slave-holding, beauty-obsessed ancient civilisations oppressed all their 'others'. But the fictional worlds created in myth and literature, with their juxtaposition of diverse voices and characters, had a licence to think, at least sometimes, in ways that were immeasurably more

# T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

The immortal forgotten other gang 233

politically advanced than the societies that produced them. The human imagination has always been capable of creating egalitarian models of society, even when they are inconceivable in practice, such as the communistic utopias of ‘golden age’ myths (Hall 1997, 125–6 with further bibliography; Hall 2008, 148–55).

Might we see Lucian’s ephrasis as ‘emergent’ ideology, ‘prefiguring’, in a ‘utopian’ form of thinking, the drastic reconfiguration of attitudes to physical disability that has begun over the last few decades? If we do, we can read it, and view Poussin’s masterpiece, in a progressive and humane spirit, alongside a few lines from the *Amenemope* (Chapter 25), an ancient Egyptian morality primer dating from between 1300 and 1075 BCE. These lines (Lichtheim 1997, 121; see also Walls 2007, 14) seem to me to be equally prefigurative, as well as to specify precisely the three forms of impairment that this chapter has discussed:

Do not laugh at a blind man,  
Nor tease a dwarf,  
Nor cause hardship for the lame.  
Don’t tease one who is in the hand of the god [i.e., ill or insane],  
Nor be angry with him for his failings.  
Man is clay and straw,  
The god is his builder.  
He tears down, he builds up daily.

## Notes

- 1 Hazlitt has slightly adapted John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* Book VII.373–4, ‘the gray / Dawn, and the Pleiades, before him danc’d’.
- 2 [www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/437326](http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/437326) (accessed 5 August 2020).
- 3 The way in which Lucian sets up this debate in *On the Hall* is well analysed by Newby (2002).
- 4 See e.g. Rose’s influential *The Staff of Oedipus* (2003), which pays close attention to Hephaestus but never mentions Cedalion or Orion.
- 5 A black-figure kantharos in Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen ZV 1466 = LIMC ‘Hephaestus’ no. 142a, where the figure is identified as ‘un petit personnage’. Thanks to Dimitris Kanellakis for help on this image.
- 6 Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Attic Oinochoe c. 430 BCE, attributed to the Eretria Painter.
- 7 [www.nhs.uk/conditions/restricted-growth/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/restricted-growth/) (accessed 5 August 2020).
- 8 Conveniently viewable online at [www.theoi.com/Gallery/F7.2.html](http://www.theoi.com/Gallery/F7.2.html) (accessed 5 August 2020).
- 9 See also Aristophanes’s *Peace* 781–791, a controversial passage where the sons of Carcinus are said to be dwarfish in size.
- 10 Hephaestus’s own agency, wit, and success, as opposed to the mockery he suffers, are neglected in most studies of his disability; for example Garland (2010) 61–3; Kelley (2007) 35–39. Exceptions include Natale (2008) and Hall (2018).
- 11 Antikensammlung, IV 3577, an image conveniently viewable online at [www.khm.at/en/objectdb/detail/56546/?offset=129&lv=list](http://www.khm.at/en/objectdb/detail/56546/?offset=129&lv=list) (accessed 5 August 2020).

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

234 Edith Hall

---

- 12 See the dignity and pathos of the painting of Hephaestus, entreated by Thetis and supported by his handmaiden automata, by Henry Fuseli (1805), inspired by Pope's translation of the *Iliad*: number 1191 in Schiff (1975).
- 13 Athens, National Museum of Archaeology, no. 664; also noted by Dasen (1993) 199.

### References

- Adelson, Betty M. (2005) 'Dwarfs: the changing lives of archetypal "curiosities" – and echoes of the past.' *Disability Studies Quarterly* 25(3). Online at [www.dsqsds.org/article/view/576/753](http://www.dsqsds.org/article/view/576/753)
- Auerbach, Erich (1959) *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature: Six Essays* (= *Theory and History of Literature*, vol. 9). Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Backstrom, Laura (2012) 'From the freak show to the living room: cultural representations of dwarfism and obesity.' *Sociological Forum* 27, 682–707.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail (1986) 'Response to a question from the *Novy Mir* editorial staff.' Trans. Vern W. McGee. In Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (eds), *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1–7.
- Bernidaki-Aldous, Eleftheria (1990) *Blindness in a Culture of Light*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Brown, Christopher G. (1989) 'Ares, Aphrodite, and the laughter of the Gods.' *Phoenix* 43, 283–293.
- Burkert, Walter (1970) 'Jason, Hypsipyle, and new fire at Lemnos: a study in myth and ritual.' *Classical Quarterly* 20, 1–16.
- Burlington (1944) Anonymous editorial, 'The history of Poussin's Orion: a postscript.' *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 84(491), 51.
- Carrier, David (1990–1) 'Blindness and the representation of desire in Poussin's Paintings.' *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 19/20, 31–52.
- Clarke, Hannah (2019) 'Queer Classics: survey of LGBTQ+ Classicists reveals community and continuity.' *Eidolon*, 23 July. Online at <https://eidolon.pub/queer-classics-b84819356f74>
- Comes, Natalis (1976 [1567]) *Mythologie*. Facsimile of the 1627 edition of the French translation by Jean Baudouin. 2 vols. New York and London: Garland.
- Cropper, Elizabeth (1984) *The Ideal of Painting*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Dasen, Véronique (1993) *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Deroy, Louis (1956) 'À propos de l'épithète homérique d'Héphaistos ἀμφιγυής.' *RHR* 150, 129–135.
- Detienne, Marcel (1970) 'Le Phoque, le crabe et le forgeron.' In Roland Crahay, Marcelle Derwa and Robert Joly (eds), *Hommages à Marie Delcourt* (Latomus Coll. 114). Brussels: Latomus, 219–233.
- Detienne, Marcel and Jean-Pierre Vernant (1978) *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society*. Trans. Janet Lloyd. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities.
- Fontenrose, Joseph (1981) *Orion: The Myth of the Hunter and the Huntress* (= UCPCS vol. 23). Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Garland, Robert (2010.) *The Eye of the Beholder: Deformity and Disability in the Graeco-Roman World* (2nd edn). London: Bristol Classical Press.
- Gombrich, Ernst H. (1944) 'The subject of Poussin's Orion.' *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 84(491), 37–41. [Reprinted in his *Symbolic Images: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance*. London: Phaidon, 119–122.]



## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

The immortal forgotten other gang 235

- Greenwood, Emily (2010) *Afro-Greeks: Dialogues Between Anglophone Caribbean Literature and Classics in the Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Haggard, Patrick and Sam Rodgers (2000) 'The movement disorder of Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665).' *Movement Disorders* 15(2), 328–334.
- Hall, Edith (1997) 'The sociology of Athenian tragedy.' In Pat Easterling (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 93–126.
- Hall, Edith (2006) *The Theatrical Cast of Athens*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hall, Edith (2008) *The Return of Ulysses*. London: IB Tauris.
- Hall, Edith (2018) 'Hephaestus the hobbling humorist: the club-footed god in the history of early Greek comedy.' *Illinois Classical Studies* 43(2), 366–386.
- Hall, Edith and Henry Stead (2020) *A People's History of Classics: Class and Greco-Roman Antiquity in Britain and Ireland 1689–1939*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Hasluck, Frederick W. (1909–10) 'Terra Lemnia.' *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 16, 220–231.
- Hazlitt, William (1824) 'On a Landscape by Nicolas Poussin', in his *Table-Talk: Original Essays on Men and Manners*, vol. II (2nd edn). London: Henry Colburn, 3–15.
- Heilbrun, Carolyn (1990 [1985]) 'What was Penelope unweaving?', in her *Hamlet's Mother and Other Women*. New York: Columbia University, 103–111.
- Horn, Cornelia B. (2013) 'A nexus of disabilities in ancient Greek miracle stories: a comparison of accounts of blindness from the Asklepieion in Epidaurous and the shrine of Thecla in Seleucia.' In Christian Laes, Chris F. Goodey and M. Lynn Rose (eds), *Disabilities in Roman Antiquity*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 115–143.
- Jackson, Steven (1997) 'Callimachus, Istrus and two mortals' deaths.' *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica*, New Series 56, 105–118.
- Kazantzis, Judith (1999) *The Odysseus Poems: Fictions on the Odyssey of Homer*. Tregarne, UK: Cargo Press.
- Kelley, Nicole (2007) 'Deformity and disability in Greece and Rome.' In Hector Avalos, Sarah J. Melcher and Jeremy Schipper (eds), *This Abled Body: Rethinking Disabilities in Biblical Studies*. Leiden & Boston: Brill, 31–45.
- Kozma, Chahira (2010) 'The ancient Egyptian dwarfs of the Walters Art Museum.' *American Journal of Medical Genetics. Part A.*, 152(10), 2556–2562.
- Lahr, John (1993) 'Inventing the enemy.' *New Yorker*, 18 October, 103–106.
- Lichtheim, Miriam (1997) 'Instruction of Amenemope.' *COS* 1(47), 115–122.
- Natale, Antonio (2008) *Il riso di Hephaestus: all'origine del comico nella poesia e nell'arte dei greci*. Rome: L'Erma.
- Neer, Richard T. (2006–7) 'Poussin and the ethics of imitation.' *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 51(52), 297–344.
- Newby, Zara (2002) 'Testing the boundaries of ekphrasis: Lucian's On the Hall.' *The Verbal and the Visual: Cultures of Ekphrasis in Antiquity* [Special Issue of *Ramus* 31(1–2), ed. Jaś Elsner]. Bentleigh, Victoria: Aural, 126–135.
- Newton, Rick M. (1987) 'Odysseus and Hephaestus in the *Odyssey*.' *Classical Journal* 83, 12–20.
- Rinon, Yoav (2006) 'Tragic Hephaestus: the humanized God in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.' *Phoenix* 60, 1–20.
- Rose, Martha L. (2003) *The Staff of Oedipus: Transforming Disability in Ancient Greece*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Schiff, Gert (1975) *Henry Fuseli, 1741–1825*. Trans. S. Twohig. London: Tate.

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

236 Edith Hall

---

- Shipton, Matthew (2018) *The Politics of Youth in Greek Tragedy*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Smith, Tyler Jo (2009) 'Komastai or "Hephaistoi"? Visions of comic parody in Archaic Greece.' *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 52, 69–92.
- Stevenson, William Edward III (1975) 'The Pathological Grotesque Representation in Greek and Roman Art.' PhD thesis, University of Pennsylvania.
- Storey, Ian C. (ed. and trans.) (2011) *Fragments of Old Comedy*, vol. 1. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Taplin, Oliver (1989) *Greek Fire*. London: Cape.
- Trentin, Lisa (2013) 'Exploring visual impairment in ancient Rome'. In Christian Laes, Chris F. Goodey and M. Lynn Rose (eds), *Disabilities in Roman Antiquity*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 89–124.
- Vernant, Jean-Pierre (1988) 'The tragic subject: historicity and transhistoricity.' In Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet (eds), *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*. Trans. Janet Lloyd. New York: Zone Books, 237–247.
- Vidal-Naquet, Pierre (1988) 'Oedipus in Vicenza and in Paris: two turning points in the history of Oedipus.' In Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet (eds), *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*. Trans. Janet Lloyd. New York: Zone Books, 361–380.
- Vollkommer, Rainer (1990) 'Kedalion.' *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* vol. 1. Zurich and Munich: Artemis, 978–979.
- Walcott, Derek (1949) *Epitaph for the Young*. Bridgetown: Barbados Advocate.
- Walcott, Derek (1990) *Omeros*. London: Faber & Faber.
- Walls, Neal H. (2007) 'The origins of the disabled body: disability in ancient Mesopotamia.' In Hector Avalos, Sarah J. Melcher and Jeremy Schipper (eds) *This Able Body: Rethinking Disabilities in Biblical Studies*. Leiden & Boston: Brill, 13–30.
- Welcker, Friedrich G. (1851) *Alte Denkmäler*, vol. II. Göttingen: Dieterichschen Buchhandlung.
- West, Martin L. (2001) 'The Fragmentary Homeric Hymn to Dionysus', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 134, 1–11.
- Williams, Raymond (1977) *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Yoshida, Atsuhiko (1969) 'Mythe d'Orion et de Cédalion.' In Jacqueline Bibauw (ed.), *Hommages à Marcel Renard* vol. II (= Collection Latomus 102). Brussels: Latomus, 828–844.

# T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

## Chapter 10

---

### **A history of our own?**

#### Using Classics in disability histories

*Helen King*

---

#### **Abstract**

This chapter discusses the uses of the classical world in constructing histories of disability and in considering what disability is. It investigates a range of conditions, including asthma, endometriosis, and conditions of hearing and sight. Some histories focus on key authorities from antiquity, such as Hippocrates, Aristotle, or Plato, while others look at inspiring individuals such as Quintus Pedius. The emphasis may be on continuity, or on change and progress. Modern literature and art can also use the classical world as a way of representing disability. In the case of Nydia, the blind flower girl of Bulwer-Lytton's *Last Days of Pompeii* who leads her companions to safety, nineteenth-century audiences found her so sympathetic that Randolph Rogers produced a sculpture of her, copies of which are still displayed across the world today. The response to her from more recent blind activists is less sympathetic.

#### **Introduction**

How do disability histories use the classical world, and in what other ways has the classical legacy been called on for help in constructing responses to disability? In this chapter I want to consider two approaches to these questions: the first using formal histories of particular conditions defined as disabilities, and the second based on more creative literary or artistic responses in which the ancient world is the subject of various types of reception.

Histories of disability may be created by awareness and support groups, or by medical specialists: in the former case, these are currently found in blogs and official sites online, whereas specialists tend to publish in medical journals. The material used in these histories comes from readings of ancient medicine and philosophy. The focus is often on the achievements of individuals with which-ever condition is being discussed, although some such histories provide a less personalised timeline of key contributions (e.g. Bottrell n.d.).

The authors of such histories, like other writers of history, need to decide where to start: a decision that can be very significant for the message the history

# T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

238 Helen King

---

is intended to convey. A history of a disability can be presented as one that extends as far back as possible, thus stressing continuity and a shared experience between us and the past and invoking the key names of the Western tradition such as Hippocrates, Plato, or Aristotle; or, instead, it can concentrate on change, telling the story of a recent moment of breakthrough or enlightenment coming after millennia of darkness. If the first of these options is taken, then authors still need to decide where to position themselves in relation to the ancient world. This entails determining whether classical examples remain ‘good to think with’, or whether they should be dismissed as merely cautionary tales of a less enlightened time.

But it is not only ancient medicine and philosophy that are used in understanding disability. In the reception of the ancient world, classical myth can also be drawn on to represent disability and responses to it. Here, too, in artistic and literary works that engage with the Classics, considerations of whether to concentrate on similarity or on difference are brought into play. In the second part of this chapter, I shall look at some works of fiction created in the modern era that have contributed to views of ancient Greek and Roman approaches to disability as well as helping people to think about disability in their own contexts.

## Creating genealogies of disability

### **Asthma**

Histories of asthma provide excellent illustrations of the options available in using history to understand a disability. For example, a section of the *Journal of Asthma* takes the ‘achievements of individuals’ approach, with accounts of ‘the experience of asthma in the life of outstanding persons’ such as Seneca the Younger (Panzani 1988); in one of his letters, Seneca strikingly described an acute attack of ‘shortness of breath’ (Lat. *suspirium*), adding that he saw no reason to use the Greek name for it – *asthma* – and observed that doctors called it ‘practising how to die’ (*Ep.* 54.2; Jackson 2009, 17–9). This long history and the focus on achievements, with the personal touch of the voice of someone who apparently had the condition, clearly resonate with contemporary people with asthma who note that it was ‘as though I had a special connection with this guy who lived more than 2,000 years before me’ (Bottrell 2015a, n.p.)<sup>1</sup> and who also find it reassuring to remember that there was a time ‘when there was no cure and no remedy that really provided any relief. It must have been pure hell to live like that’ (Frea 2011, n.p.). Another journal, *Allergy and Asthma Proceedings*, includes a parallel series started by Sheldon Cohen on ‘Asthma among the famous’, with the classical individuals featured including Seneca, Pliny the Elder, and ‘Augustus Caesar (63 B.C.–A.D. 14) first emperor of Rome’ (King and Cohen 2001).

The respiratory therapist and freelance writer John Bottrell (who had asthma) included Seneca in his ‘Asthma history’ blog, set up in 2013 to ‘provide

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

A history of our own? 239

a history of lung diseases from the beginning of time to today’ (Bottrell 2015b). Over the blog as a whole, however, his focus is more on providing a long narrative account of the condition by providing brief biographies alongside summaries of texts. In his first post for this blog, he traced, ‘The oldest description of asthma (sort of)’ to 2697 BCE, to Chinese medicine and specifically to the *Yellow Emperor’s Classic on Internal Medicine*; the ‘sort of’ is because the description referenced here is to difficulty in breathing rather than to a named disease (Bottrell 2013a; Jackson 2009, 40–1). Bottrell considers that the person ‘who made asthma a household name’ was Hippocrates, and, after medicine took a brief detour into considering that the condition was a nervous disorder, ‘It wouldn’t be until the early 19th century that it was proved that Hippocrates was right all along, at least about asthma being spasmodic in nature’ (Bottrell 2013b).

Because the names of Hippocrates, Aristotle, and Galen continue to hold power, writers of disability histories are keen to include them. In most medical narratives that invoke the classical past, the key name remains that of Hippocrates, and, in my book *Hippocrates Now: The ‘Father of Medicine’ in the Internet Age* (King 2019), I demonstrated how Hippocrates today is almost always regarded as being ‘right’. We meet him in many places where the body is under discussion, from Wikipedia to ‘quotes’, and from news outlets to social media. In contexts ranging from the validity of the Hippocratic Oath to the ideal diet, he is claimed as the father not just of medicine, but of health, of food science, and of holism. Histories of disability and of various medical conditions that are aimed at medical practitioners rather than at those with the condition may include Hippocrates not just to create a picture of continuity, but also to provide a sense of progress, as in Edmund Keeney’s presidential address to the 1964 annual meeting of the American Society of Allergy, entitled ‘The history of asthma from Hippocrates to Meltzer’ (1964). Keeney’s comments on the ancient world repeated what was then the standard textbook picture of movement from darkness to light and from superstition to ‘rationality’, a shift in which Hippocrates was thought to be crucial. Where the focus is on therapy rather than description or identification of a condition, however, Hippocrates may be considered less relevant. In ‘A brief history of asthma and its mechanisms to modern concepts of disease pathogenesis’, for a journal focusing on allergy, asthma, and immunology, Stephen Holgate highlighted the changes in understanding of the condition that led to a shift in therapy from bronchodilators to corticosteroids; for this particular story, only a single sentence on the Greek origin of the word ‘asthma’ was considered necessary, with the historical narrative beginning only in the late nineteenth century (Holgate 2010, 165).

Much hinges on how significant the use of the word *asthma* in the Hippocratic corpus is considered to be. It is certainly used there, as it is just a word meaning ‘panting’ or simply ‘breath’, but this can be blown up out of all proportion. There is no awareness in these histories that, in all instances in which the word features in Hippocratic treatises, it is used in the plural, *asthmata*, rather than as a disease label. Although some such histories at least recognise that Hippocratic usage concerns a symptom rather than a named condition,

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

240 Helen King

---

many do not make this distinction. A web page on ‘Who discovered asthma?’ currently offers, ‘The history of the discovery of asthma as an acute respiratory disorder came to light in 400 BC. The term ‘Asthma’ was first used by Hippocrates in his book *Corpus Hippocraticum*, where he also provided a definition for the medical term (How to Use Inhalers 2012). Although the ‘light’ in this story of enlightenment is here firmly associated with Hippocrates, the date of 400 BCE is entirely arbitrary, probably based on taking the traditional dates for Hippocrates – 460–370 BCE – and then picking a round number in between.

Although Hippocrates is often credited with making *asthma* into a ‘medical term’, there is a variant that splits the roles of recognition of a symptom and describing a condition. In this version of the history, Hippocrates was aware of it simply as a symptom, and it was only with Aretaeus that it became something more, so that the credit for ‘the first accurate *description* of asthma, as we know it today’ (Karamanou and Androutsos 2011, n.p.; my italics) goes instead to Aretaeus (Sakula 1988, 35).

The search for medical wisdom in the past is by no means only a modern phenomenon, and other names from ancient medicine may also feature in histories of asthma. In his *Observations on the History and Cure of the Asthma* (1793), Michael Ryan claimed that he had

read most of the modern writers, and hitherto had tried their methods, and hot pectorals and cephalics in vain. I believed by my ill success in their way that they never understood this disease; and therefore turned over some of the old writers, Galen, Aegineta [Paul of Aegina], Aetius, &c. where I found more rational notions, and was directed by them to the use of that medicine which does very much relieve and prevent my fits.

Ryan (1793, 65–6)

This picture of a turn towards history in order to help one’s own condition feels very modern indeed. As this passage suggests, Ryan believed that the remedies used by classical authors were ‘not only rational but successful’ (Ryan 1793, 64). Hippocrates featured here too, as another hero of this story: whereas Hippocrates was ‘intimately acquainted’ with the nature of asthma (Ryan 1793, 57), Galen had ‘pervert[ed] the intention and meaning of this illustrious writer’ (Ryan 1793, 58). Ryan’s favoured remedy was the cold bath; in the eighteenth century, the healing powers of both hot and cold baths were commonly traced back to Hippocrates (e.g. Floyer 1715, 47).

Not everyone agrees, or has agreed, that effective remedies can be taken from the past. One popular website observes that Aretaeus’s ‘suggested remedy of drinking a concoction of owl’s blood and wine, however, is thankfully no longer a recommended intervention for asthma’ (Felman 2018, n.p.). *Asthma: The Ultimate Teen Guide* attributes this remedy simply to ‘The Romans’ and contrasts it with Maimonides’s ‘more appetizing choice’ of chicken soup (Paquette 2003, 1). The owl’s blood remedy, part of the approach to ancient

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

A history of our own? 241

medicine that focuses on the ‘curiosities’ rather than making it into the ancestor of modern medicine, is variously attributed across histories of asthma. I have found no evidence that it derives from Aretaeus; although he does indeed describe asthma along with orthopnoea in his treatise *On Chronic Diseases* (1.1), this remedy does not feature in Aretaeus’s *Cures for Chronic Diseases*. In histories of asthma produced for a general readership, it may be the better-known Galen, rather than Aretaeus, who is associated with owl’s blood: for example, ‘Galen the ancient Greek physician treated sufferers with the disgusting concoction of owl’s blood in wine’ (Thorpe 2015, n.p.). I have not so far managed to pin this story down, but it may originate in al-Rāzī’s (Rhazes’s) *al-Hāwī* (1955–68, Vol 4, 39), which records a remedy used in one of the medical treatises that, in the Middle Ages, was associated with the name of a ninth-century Christian physician, Yūḥannā ibn Māsawayh (known in the West as John Mesue).<sup>2</sup> According to Rhazes, Mesue

used for asthma and shortness of breath two drachmas of dried and powdered fox lung and decoction of figs added to a drink. In differing with Galen who reported many cured of asthma with owl’s blood in a drink or giving owl’s flesh with food and drinking its blood afterwards – owl’s blood is not to be given in any case of asthma having seen it administrated and useless.

Cserhádi (2004, 258)<sup>3</sup>

In Mesue’s reading, just because Galen reported the remedy – and the reference, in the treatise *De simplicium medicamentorum temperamentis ac facultatibus* 10.3 (Kühn 1965 12.257), is to the *noctua*, the night-owl – does not mean that anyone should use it now. In an odd twist on this story, an article on whether Hippocrates or Galen ‘discovered’ asthma states that Galen’s treatment for it was ‘owl’s wine’ (Cotto 2008, n.p.), the author adding that both authors ‘described asthma correctly’ in contrast to ‘modern day physicians’ who, until the 1980s, thought ‘that asthma was purely a psychological condition’.

Other versions of the asthma origin story that focus on ancient Greece correctly note that the term *asthma* existed before the Hippocratic texts, so that the Hippocratic contribution is to transform it from an everyday word to a ‘medical term’ (e.g. Marketos and Ballas 1982). Such a claim raises the contentious issue of whether there was such a thing as a technical medical vocabulary in classical Greece. Does the terminology of the Hippocratic corpus simply repeat what was already in common use, or was the process the reverse, with non-medical writers picking up words from medical texts? For example, Thucydides, Euripides, and Aeschylus use terms that sound ‘technical’ to us, but does this mean that they took them from medical writing? These are important questions because of what they imply about the relationship between medicine and its wider cultural context. It is now nearly 70 years since Page (1953) noted what he considered to be ‘technical’ medical terminology in

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

242 Helen King

---

Thucydides's description of the Plague of Athens, with Lichtenhaeler subsequently arguing that, 'il est donc établi comme une *certitude* que l'Historien athénien a écrit la peste à l'aide de la terminologie scientifique contemporaine' (1965, 33; author's italics). Another example would be Euripides's application to Philoctetes's disease of the word *phagedaina* (fr. 792 Nauck). This word is otherwise found only in the Hippocratic corpus, Democritus, Demosthenes, and in one of the Epidaurus *iamata* (Jouanna 2012a, 90–1, n. 22). As Jacques Jouanna has pointed out, in its use in Euripides, the word seems to be taken from Aeschylus's play on the same theme, and Aeschylus died at around the time Hippocrates was probably born. But is that enough to make it a 'technical term' borrowed by tragedy from medicine? Not necessarily; examples such as this one may instead preserve Ionian words that had gone out of usage except in medicine and drama (Jouanna 2012b, 74–5).

We can, therefore, see that the various versions of the history of asthma raise several questions applicable to disability history more widely. Is the story being told one of continuity, or of change and progress? Is a classical reference being used to provide a 'landmark in medical history', whether that is the origin of the name or the first clinically recognisable description? Is it reassuring to know that a condition which you have goes back a long way in time, and to encounter the 'achievements' of those who share it? Those who want to present a condition as having a long history often feel the need to include Hippocrates in this, even though they may find it difficult to go beyond stating that the word is used in the Hippocratic corpus. Where the diagnosis is presented as an old one, then the length of the history constructed for it becomes significant. If this is a long history, does it matter whether we go back to Hippocrates in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, or only to Aretaeus in the second century CE, so long as there is a 'classic' somewhere in the story? Do we foreground the Greek and Roman Classics, or look to non-Western cultures – for example, to China in 2697 BCE? Is it age we want, or a Western classical pedigree? What about the Ebers Papyrus or the Code of Hammurabi (e.g. Sakula 1988; Cannizzaro 2017; Patel 2019)? Although ancient texts may be praised for recognising or describing a condition, or for finding a remedy that science subsequently forgot, there is also the tendency to dismiss older remedies for it as 'disgusting' or, in internet parlance, 'weird' (Saxena 2019). Perhaps what is most important is whether the story being told produces confidence in where we are now.

### **Endometriosis**

These points can be illustrated further by looking briefly at the debilitating condition of endometriosis, a condition that, in the UK, is currently regarded as disabling but not a disability, not least because the pressure groups working to support those with it consider that it would increase discrimination against women in the workplace if it were to be so labelled. Nevertheless, women with endometriosis can apply for disability benefits (Endometriosis UK 2017).



## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

A history of our own? 243

Histories of endometriosis written for a general audience claim a Hippocratic origin that does not exist; for example:

As with many medical conditions, there were a couple of blokes squabbling over who was the first to describe in [*sic*] around the 19th century, but there is even mention of the condition and its symptoms in the Hippocratic corpus which contains works from the 4th and 5th centuries BC.

Mitra (2017, n.p.)

In an article published by three US medical doctors in 2012, ‘Endometriosis, ancient disease, ancient treatments’, endometriosis was identified with ‘hysteria’ – in itself, hardly a secure diagnosis (King 1993) – and a lengthy pedigree going back to the Hippocratic corpus was offered, along with the claim that the symptoms in the ancient Greek texts ‘remarkably ... correspond nearly seamlessly to the set of symptoms identified today as emblems of endometriosis’ (Nezhat et al. 2012, 3). Even leaving aside the many factual errors made in this 2012 article, which include attributing to the Hippocratic treatise *On Virgins* a passage that does not feature in it, presenting an image of the Delphic oracle as an example of the medical treatment of fumigation (Nezhat et al. 2012, 4 and Fig. 4), and colluding in the now-discredited myth of ‘Trotula’ as the name of ‘one of the most celebrated female physicians of ancient times’ (Nezhat et al. 2012, 13; ignoring, *inter alia*, Green 2001), this picture of continuity is remarkably strained. ‘Nearly seamlessly’? On my own experience of severe endometriosis, I would certainly challenge identification with hysteria; it is nothing like the various symptoms from the ‘hysteria’ tradition that this article confidently presents, such as ‘lying as if dead for seven days’ (Nezhat et al. 2012, 6). This phrase, unattributed in Nezhat, comes from Pliny, *Natural History* (7.52.175), and is entirely serious about ‘as if dead’; in the ‘hysteria’ tradition, this does not mean just feeling a bit rough, but suggests that there is a risk of premature burial (King 1993, 6 and 34).

The alternative to this ‘longue durée’ approach is to deny that any ancient references to endometriosis exist (e.g. Sutton 2006, 3) and instead to present this debilitating condition as having a far shorter history and as ‘new’ or ‘modern’, as for example in the title of an article arguing for its discovery only in the 1920s that was published in a medical journal in 2011, ‘Endometriosis, a modern syndrome’ (Brosens and Benagiano 2011). Like asthma, endometriosis has been linked to industrialisation, although even that claim is disputed (Jackson 2006, 148). But calling it ‘a modern syndrome’ and deciding that the length of its history is very short is also a political move because, from the 1940s, it was linked with women who were delaying having children because of their careers (Sanmiguel 2000). As late as 1991, US natural health magazine *Total Health* ran a story that included: ‘It is called the “Career Woman’s Disease” because it is predominantly found in women in their thirties, and occasionally twenties, who have not yet had children’ (Binder 1991). This causation

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

244 Helen King

---

story, which suggests putting the blame on women for seeking fulfilment – or just an income – from something other than motherhood, is no longer as common as it was in the 1980s and 1990s (incidentally, the time when I was diagnosed). Although one may assume that the ‘it’s about career women’ story militates against a search for a Hippocratic pedigree, that is not always the case; the 2012 ‘Ancient disease, ancient treatments’ article bizarrely suggested that Hippocratic claims that pregnancy releases a woman from menstrual disorders – ‘if she conceives, she is healthy’ (King 2005) – are ‘a near conceptual equivalent to the 20th-century notion of endometriosis as a “career woman’s disease”’ (Nezhat et al. 2012, 3).

### **Deafness**

Asthma and endometriosis are very much hidden disabilities. Hearing impairments, while also being invisible, are more likely to become apparent in social interaction. In a culture such as that of the Greco-Roman world, a person who could not hear – whether this was permanent or temporary, total or partial – could follow practical instructions well enough to do many jobs (Adams 2020, 87–8), but this would not be the case for some elite roles based on orality, using persuasion and the skills of formal rhetoric. Christian Laes has already explored the complexities of classical terminology in *Disabilities and the Disabled in the Roman World: A Social and Cultural History* (2018), and I shall not revisit his arguments in any detail here. The link between hearing and speech does seem to be one recognised in antiquity. The Hippocratic *Fleshes* 18 mentions those who are deaf (*hoi kôloi*) from birth who can utter ‘mere sounds’ (*monophôna*) but cannot speak. The deaf-mute is, in Greek, *eneos* (Laes 2018, 122, citing Galen’s definition of the term). The terminology can, however, sometimes make it difficult to distinguish those who are deaf-mutes from those who appear closer to our category of selective mutism, such as Pliny’s Maecenas Melissus, who ‘decided’ to stay silent for three years after bringing up blood during a convulsion (Pliny, *NH* 28.62), or to autism (Laes 2018, 118–9). Are such modern diagnoses also appropriate to those healing miracles in which someone is unable to speak but then gives an answer in response to a question from the god, such as the mute boy who, during a sacrifice, spoke in answer to a slave who was helping with the firewood (IG IV<sup>2</sup> 121.41–48; LiDonnici 1995, A5)?

As with asthma, and to a lesser extent endometriosis, Hippocrates features in the history of hearing and its disabilities. Here is a claim from ‘A brief history of otorhinolaryngology’ published in a Brazilian journal of the specialism in 2007: ‘With merely empirical treatments, Hippocrates, was also interested in otology, however himself and his disciples were more concerned with the relations ear infections had with other organs, especially the brain and tonsils’ (Nogueira et al. 2007, 694). So, even if Hippocrates is acknowledged as having little to contribute, he must at least be mentioned, even if only as ‘interested in’. The wording here is taken almost verbatim from this article’s stated source, an

# T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

A history of our own? 245

---

article by Joseph Hawkins, who co-wrote a series of ‘historical sketches’ of otohistory for the journal *Audiology and Neurotology* in 2004 and 2006, some of which were then published as a book (Hawkins and Schacht 2008). Hawkins mentioned:

The acute observations of Hippocrates ... about the symptoms, diagnosis, course and treatment of diseases, including those of the ear ... His methods of treatment were almost entirely empirical, and he had scant knowledge of anatomy of the ear. He was mainly concerned with its infections and with their relations to other organs, including the tonsils and the brain.

Hawkins (2004, 66)

The point about Hippocrates’s main interest lying in the relationship between ear infections and the rest of the body is in turn based on a 1907 history of the discipline (Politzer 1907), widely repeated in medical literature on the ‘giants of otology’ (e.g. Traynor 2015), and is presumably what medical students were supposed to answer in response to a question in a Philadelphia 1941 exam on the history of otology: ‘Write on the otological knowledge of Hippocrates’ (Robinson 1941, 316). As for the tonsils, Hippocrates is also credited with the first tonsillectomy: ‘The first operation on the tonsils has been attributed to Hippocrates (460–375 AD)’ (Richardson 1999, 75; Vlayen et al. 2005, 49). The text that is the origin of this claim seems to be *On Glands* 7 and is a matter of ‘interpreting’ how to map the *paraisthmia* glands in the throat on to modern notions of anatomy; discussing this, the medical authors of a 2007 article – who, commendably, drew on the Loeb Hippocrates rather than relying on earlier pieces by their own peers – concluded that the author of *On Glands* ‘should be recognized as a far-seeing pioneer in haematology and medical sciences’ (Crivellato et al. 2007, 591–2).

This message that the pioneering Hippocrates ‘was right’ remains a strong one for many disabilities. For example, on the website for Epilepsy Canada, Hippocrates comes out as the hero, contrasted with the (alleged) Babylonian view that the condition was ‘supernatural’:

Hippocrates believed that epilepsy was not sacred, but a disorder of the brain - a revolutionary view. He did not believe ‘that a human could be invaded by a god, the basest by the most pure.’ He recommended physical treatments and stated that if the disease became chronic, it was incurable.

Epilepsy Canada (2016, n.p.)

The material here is taken from a World Health Organization publication (Reynolds 2005). Nor is this pattern unique to epilepsy. Along with statements about his empiricism, claims that Hippocrates moved perception of the condition being discussed from the result of divine intervention to having a natural cause are common on disability history sites; for example, on a history of

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

246 Helen King

---

developmental disabilities developed by a US group, ‘For Hippocrates, care of the body was in the hands of man rather than the gods’ (Minnesota Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities 2019, n.p.). Other websites go rather further in their claims for Hippocrates’s work on epilepsy – for example, a student project website arguing that ‘Hippocrates also develops a diet for epileptics, possibly similar to the modern Ketogenic diet, which treats epilepsy’ (Tuinstra 2001, n.p.). This appears to be assuming that the effects of fasting and of a ketogenic diet are the same.

Many histories are the product of disabled communities themselves, and because of this the history may be presented as that of a group rather than of a disability. The main example of this can be found in Deaf culture, which can present as a minority language group rather than as a disability group. In its histories, as elsewhere, the story can be created out of a series of individuals; significant here is Quintus Pedius, often described as ‘the first deaf person in recorded history known by name’. ‘Dumb from his birth’, in the translation of John Bostock, this grandson of a former consul of the same name was taught to paint and ‘made great progress in the art, but died ... in his youth’ (Pliny *NH*, 35.7; Bostock and Riley 1857, 231; Harrington 2006; Laes 2018, 118–9). Being non-verbal could, of course, point to conditions other than deafness (Adams 2020, 98).

Alternatively, in these histories, the focus can be on the development of sign language rather than on deaf people. To prove the antiquity of this mode of communication, the key text cited is Plato’s *Cratylus*, and the key individual Socrates, although in this story he does not come off very well. On an Estonian website for the history of deaf people, based on a now-deleted page from Gallaudet University (which educates the Deaf and those with hearing disabilities), we read: ‘360 BC. Socrates mentions the use of signs by the deaf, Plato’s *Cratylus*. Socrates discusses innate intelligence, and claims that Deaf people are incapable of language and ideas’ (Estonian Association of the Deaf 2010, n.p.). This statement merges two ancient sources. First, in the *Cratylus* passage to which this refers, Socrates asks Hermogenes,

Answer me this question: If we had no voice or tongue, and wished to make things clear to one another, should we not try, as dumb people actually do, to make signs with our hands and head and person generally?  
(422e–423b, tr. Harold N. Fowler 1921)

This passage, and this translation, is widely quoted, despite using the term ‘dumb’, which is no longer in current usage – for example, in a *History Today* article examining what the osteoarchaeological evidence of deafness can contribute to our knowledge of the past, although this glosses the translation to give ‘as dumb [mute] people actually do’ (Atkin 2015). Socrates goes on to describe how these people – the Greek is *hoi eneoī*, whatever that means here – use gestures, showing things that are light or higher up, or heavy or lower

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

A history of our own? 247

down, by raising or lowering their hands, or imitating the movement of a horse to say ‘horse’. This passage may sound like a positive valuation of what non-verbal people do, but, in what he entitled ‘a deaf reading’ of *Cratylus*, Bauman noted the political implications of Socrates talking about gestures as preceding words (Bauman 2008, 134); the claim for ‘preceding’ is significant here, as it suggests that communicating by words is more ‘advanced’. Drawing on the signs for ‘heavy’, ‘light’, and ‘horse galloping’ in American Sign Language, Bauman thus reads the key passage as denigrating sign languages, making signing into a primitive stage or an aberration rather than acknowledging that a fully grammatical language does not have to be based on speech, and can instead consist of gestures.

Second, that claim ‘that Deaf people are incapable of language and ideas’ is not a direct quotation from Plato, but seems to summarise Socrates saying, in a discussion of ‘rational explanation’, that anyone can make their thoughts clear by using speech; or, at least, anyone ‘can show what he thinks about anything, unless he is deaf or dumb from the first’ (*Theaetetus* 206d–e, tr. Harold N. Fowler 1921). But it also owes something to Aristotle, who is definitely not the hero of classical deaf history. Many online histories of the deaf repeat variations of ‘355 BC. Aristotle says “Those who are born deaf all become senseless and incapable of reason”’ (Estonian Association of the Deaf 2010, n.p.; Shaner 2013). This comes from a widely repeated sentence in the 1911 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Payne 1911) and, in the introduction to a history of deaf America by a deaf author, Jack Gannon, Mervin Garretson described it as ‘The most *vicious* pronouncement’ (Garretson 1981, p. xxi; my italics). Although, in *On Sense and Sensible Objects* (437a15–18), Aristotle claims that, ‘of those who have been deprived of one sense or the other from birth, the blind are more intelligent than the deaf and the dumb’ (tr. Walter Hett 1957), as Ellen Adams has noted: ‘he does not explicitly state that the deaf were incapable of obtaining rational thought, as is often claimed in modern deaf studies’ (Adams 2020, 89).

In these deaf histories that draw on the Classics, Hippocrates may come out relatively well, being seen as superior to Aristotle simply because he did not consider that those who were both deaf and mute were affected by any intellectual defect: in the 1911 *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article, for example, ‘Hippocrates was in advance of Aristotle when he realized that deaf-mutes did not speak simply because they did not know how to’ (Payne 2011, n.p.). But, in fact, there is very little in the Hippocratic corpus on those born deaf, let alone on their intellect. It is never clear whether those who do not speak are deaf, or have another condition that affects their ability to speak. The Hippocratic treatises are interested not in those who are born deaf, but in deafness as a stage of an acute disease (Adams 2020, 87, 93–4). For example, in *Prorrhetic* 1.29, suddenly becoming deaf is seen as a bad sign, which can be relieved by passing blood in the stools, but still presages death.

Nor is Hippocrates always presented as superior to Aristotle here. Giulio Ferreri, an oralist teacher of the Deaf – that is, not a supporter of sign

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

248 Helen King

---

language – noted in a paper translated into English in 1906 that the ancients handed down to us the error that being mute is about the tongue not being able to move properly, and, if it is released, then they can speak (hence our ‘tongue-tied’), and argued that Aristotle had a better understanding of how speech happens than Hippocrates did. Ferreri also commented that, in contrast to the ancient habit of defining deaf-mutes by their inability to communicate in speech, the modern term ‘deaf-mute’ puts cause and effect in the correct order (Ferreri 1906). Here, then, it is Aristotle who is seen as having the knowledge.

In modern medical literature, there is also the view that Hippocrates was the source for Aristotle’s alleged views on the intellectual capacity of the Deaf. In a 2006 invited review for the *Mediterranean Journal of Otolology*, an otologist, Anestis Psifidis (2006, 45–6), wrote:

Hippocrates believed wrongly that, in deaf-mute patients, both the hearing and speech organs had been affected. His theory that deaf-mute children were developmentally challenged was adapted by such followers as Aristotle and Galen and influenced scientific knowledge and the progress of medicine for about 2000 years. Until the 16th century, deaf-mute children were treated as disabled, invalid, and demonized individuals and were rejected by society. In ancient Sparta, deaf-mute children were thrown down Keada, a precipitous ravine, to be killed.

This is, unfortunately, a typical example of what happens when someone writes the history of his own specialism using only previous work by people in exactly the same position. In this case, Psifidis is using a 1997 book by Panos Apostolides, *Ear, Nose and Throat Diseases in Hippocrates*. There is no evidence for this Spartan slaughter of the children, but the focus here fits another of the themes of disability history, the emphasis on past ill-treatment, which is part of the broader approach to the past as a bad place to be contrasted with modern enlightenment. For example, Omvig (2019, n.p.) states:

It is reported that in many of the early great civilizations, blind babies were abandoned and left to die, either from exposure to the elements or to be eaten by wild animals. Later, some blind men were sold into galley slavery and some blind women were sold into prostitution. Others were used for amusement, but most lived their lives as beggars or were simply kept by families.

There is plenty of evidence for attitudes to disabled people that demean them. There is one reference in Plutarch to a dedicated market in Rome where they were sold as slaves:

at Rome there are some who take no account of paintings or statues or even, by Heaven, of the beauty of the boys and women for sale, but haunt the monster-market, examining those who have no calves, or are weasel-

# T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

A history of our own? 249

armed (i.e. short arms), or have three eyes, or ostrich-heads, and searching to learn whether there has been born some ‘Commingled shape and mis-formed prodigy’.

*On being a busybody* (10, 520c, tr. William Helmbold 1939)

This is supported by, for example, Quintilian, who states that physically imperfect slaves cost more than attractive slaves (*Institutions* 2.5.10–12), but it is also clear that Plutarch, as Debbie Felton, observed, ‘deplores’ the existence of this market and those who use it (Felton 2012, 128–9). The ‘bad emperors’ are also associated with using individuals with disabilities for entertainment; although we find this disturbing, as Lisa Trentin (2011) points out, the idea that you do not treat people in this way is relatively recent.

It is clear that there are different valuations of ancient authorities in the medical and disability communities. In 1993, Edmund P. Fowler of the American Otological Society (founded 1868) wrote on its history, ‘The second one hundred years: musings and dreams of things to come’. In discussing the number of developments in medical treatment over the first 100 years of the society, he referred to Hippocrates not as an otologist but in terms of ‘primum non nocere’, ‘first do no harm’; the more new things there are on offer, the greater becomes the risk of accidentally doing harm (Fowler 1993, 88). Here, even where Hippocrates has nothing to say on a particular topic, his ethics at least still need to be referenced, because medicine needs Hippocrates. Fowler also observed that, although more information was needed on the history of the society,

we cannot live on truth alone. The writers of history should use their *imagination* and so leave with us not just the words, nor just the tale, but a way of looking at things. They should record the myth as well as the facts.

Fowler (1993, 88)

This is an interesting manifesto, not least because it suggests that there is some pure form of history in which the historian offers ‘truth alone’.

## Putting yourself in the story: myth and imagination

It is clear from this brief examination of disability histories that some play fast and loose with the available evidence in order to push home their point. In this final section, I want to examine two examples of a different use of the imagination, not to select and skew ancient evidence, but instead to provide both ‘a way of looking at things’ and also a way of enabling those with disabilities to make sense of their bodies, and those without disabilities to empathise with others. This involves using the ancient world – and its reception – in a different way. My first example picks up a condition already discussed here, endometriosis. Although, as I have shown, attempts have been made either to give this a history going back to Hippocrates or instead to deny that it has any history,

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

250 Helen King

---

ancient myths can also be brought into the endometriosis story. Enovid, originally sold as a treatment for endometriosis until 1960, used an advertisement showing Andromeda ‘freed from her chains’; then, from 1960 it was marketed as a contraceptive (Enovid 1962; Junod and Marks 2002, 126). Here, the chains are ‘the cyclic mechanism of her reproductive system’, and Andromeda is labelled ‘unfettered’. In his 2009 doctoral thesis, Ronald E. Batt went further, presenting Andromeda instead as ‘the embodiment of every young woman with endometriosis’, ‘waiting to be rescued from torment’ (Batt 2009, 9). He also offered the following unattributed lines:

Look to the Sky and Imagine  
Beautiful Andromeda chained to her Rock  
Harried by the Twin Vultures of  
Pain and Infertility  
Now you have a Vivid Image  
Of every Young Woman  
Tormented by Endometriosis.

This image merges Andromeda with Prometheus, tied to a rock while a vulture comes to him each day to consume his liver (Fig. 10.1). As a former sufferer, I would question how helpful this is supposed to be to a woman with endometriosis, but the recognition of the severity of the pain with the suggestion of a cure may be encouraging.

I want to end by looking at a different aspect of constructing a history, this time not from a famous ancient medical writer, but from the point of view of a biography of an ancient person with a disability – in this case, blindness. Histories of the blind, like other disability histories, can focus on ‘the blind as objects of charity rather than active agents in history’, or on ill-treatment of those with disabilities, but may also construct their stories as ‘a collection of biographies of “extraordinary” individuals, from Homer to Helen Keller’, as the online *Encyclopaedia Britannica* puts it, pointing out that part of the reason for the focus on individuals is the absence of any ‘sustained organized efforts by the blind to act in concert to achieve collective goals’ (Miller 2014, n.p.).

One such extraordinary individual is Nydia, the blind flower girl of Pompeii. Although she is not a real historical figure, her life in art, opera, and song after she was created by Edward Bulwer-Lytton in *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834) almost makes her one (Hunnings 2011, 181–2; Moormann 2015). Bulwer’s novel was inspired by visits to Naples in 1833, including the sites of Pompeii itself – and the finds from there displayed in Naples Museum – and Florence, where he saw Karl Bruillov’s painting *The Last Day of Pompeii* (1830–3). Drawing on an existing trope of the volcano disaster, and on a popular interest in staged volcanic eruptions from the 1770s onwards, his novel also reflects a growing tendency to focus on the individuals affected by such disasters rather than on the global picture (Daly 2011, 271). Earlier examples of this shift to the individual



## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

A history of our own? 251



Figure 10.1 Enovid image of Andromeda supplied by Museum of Contraception and Abortion, Vienna (with permission)

included stories in which the earthquake saves a noble virgin from rape or a Christian from being attacked by a lion, as in Lincoln Fairfield's *The Last Night of Pompeii* (1832; Daly 2011, 268).

As a woman, a slave, and a blind person, Nydia is othered in more than one way. In the novel, she is treated badly by her owner Stratonice, then sold on to Glaucus, whom she loves, and then passed on by him to Ione, whom he loves. Her slave status is particularly significant when we consider that the novel was published one year after the abolition of slavery entered British law, and that Bulwer-Lytton was MP for Lincoln at publication. In 1838, he spoke in the House of Commons against the treatment of former slaves in the proposed Negro Apprenticeship Bill, under which those who had been freed were then expected to work for nothing as apprentices (Hunnings 2011, 185–6; Gross 1981). The only way in which Nydia could be further othered would be to make her of a different race; as Ato Quayson has observed, the language of

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

252 Helen King

---

disability and that of racial difference have been very close in the history of colonialism (Quayson 2007, 10).

One long-lasting trope associated with blindness is that it brings inner vision (Quayson 2007, 92–3); we may think here of Tiresias, blinded but given the gift of prophecy, or the idea that Homer was blind. Nydia’s blindness does not give her insight or foresight, but it means that she can lead Glaucus and Ione to safety when darkness descends on the city after Vesuvius erupts. However, she then kills herself. Bulwer explicitly included among his inspirations the idea that the darkness after the eruption of Vesuvius would favour someone already blind (Daly 2011, 273; Schiller 1993, 40), and this remains a trope of fiction, as in the 1960s thriller (both a play and a film) *Wait Until Dark*, where darkness gives the trapped blind heroine her chance to turn the tables on the villains. The lead role in a stage production was not given to a blind actress until 2017, in a touring production in the UK; the actress, Karina Jones, said in an interview, ‘I’ve totally got an advantage because I’ve got a lot of shorthand. I’ve got a head start because I have real insight into the character’ (Finke 2017, n.p.). As blind heroine, Nydia has her own ‘head start’ in the darkness; Jessica L. Langworthy mentions a real example of blind girls leading their sighted teachers to safety through the smoke of a fire (Langworthy 1930, 276).

Nydia is very much an idealized nineteenth-century blind person, who, in the words of Leanne Hunnings, ‘sits on the boundary between passivity and activity, objectivity and subjectivity, victimhood and agency’ (Hunnings 2011, 182). The visual, in many forms, plays an important role in the book – witnessing a murder, witnessing the crucifixion – but Nydia is by definition always the Viewed, never the Viewer (Hunnings 2011, 199). Her previous owner, Stratonice, bought her at the slave market without realising she was blind but resigned herself to the purchase, especially when she found out that Nydia could sing (although her songs are always sad ones). In her ability to perform, Nydia reflects the nineteenth-century attitude that it is better to be blind than deaf, as described in this 1846 article in the *Westminster Review* (cited in Sharman 1996, n.p.):

One of the most striking differences between the blind and the deaf is the tendency shown by the blind, in all ages, to poetry and poetical composition, – a taste which the deaf have never exhibited. The great command of language acquired by the blind, the excellence of their ear, and the absence of excitement and distraction from the sensations of sight, will go far to account for this peculiarity ... The deaf, on the contrary, have no command of language, no ear, and a sad deficiency of ideas and emotions, while their possession of that admirable organ, the eye, tends to overpower their inner feelings, and to throw them upon visual sensations for a great part of their enjoyment.

Throughout, she is presented as someone to be pitied, but, as Stratonice found, there is an economic advantage to pity because people will pay more for the flowers she picks than they will to any other flower girl.

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

A history of our own? 253

‘I am often ailing,’ said the blind girl, touchingly; ‘and as I grow up I grieve more that I am blind. But now to the flowers!’ So saying, she made a slight reverence with her head, and passing into the viridarium, busied herself with watering the flowers. ‘Poor Nydia,’ thought Glaucus, gazing on her; ‘thine is a hard doom!’

Bulwer-Lytton (1834, 42)

The switch to the upbeat ‘Now to the flowers!’ may reflect a nineteenth-century view that the blind were ‘the most habitually cheerful of humankind’ (Holmes 2004, 105).

I have found it useful to compare Nydia with the characterisation of another blind flower girl in the 1868 novel *Elsie, the Blind Flower Girl; A story of the Sheltering Arms*. This was one of several improving novels written to support an Episcopal foundation, The Sheltering Arms, in New York City, which from 1864 took in young children, including orphans, and those with disabilities (Higginbotham, n.d.). There is no evidence of direct influence of the Nydia story on this one, and the many similarities are likely simply to echo prevailing notions. We are told that God gave Elsie ‘cheerfulness of spirit ... seemingly in compensation for her loss’ (Anon. 1868, 57) and that, ‘We only know that the blind from birth seem gifted with a particular serenity of spirit and cheerful sense of enjoyment’ (Anon. 1868, 61). When we first meet Elsie, it is when Sister Phebe has gone out to buy some flowers to decorate the church for Easter; before she can enter the shop on Broadway, ‘an engaging-looking child, between eleven and twelve years of age, carrying in her hand a basket of small, tastefully arranged bouquets’ (Anon. 1868, 11) gains her attention. She has ‘a strange vagueness of expression’ in her eyes and uses a small dog, Gyp, as her guide. She is currently looked after by Margaret, but Sister Phebe is sure that the Sheltering Arms will be better for her. Blind from birth, like Nydia, she too not only has a way with flowers, but can also sing beautifully, ‘a melody fresh and clear as a young bird’s’ (Anon. 1868, 21). An enhanced sense of touch helps her to learn to knit (Anon. 1868, 58–9). The modern reader may be desperate for a fire from which Elsie can save the nuns, but the novel instead goes through the stages of the liturgical and secular year, outlining how those at the Sheltering Arms occupy their time. Like Nydia, Elsie dies at the end of her story, but of consumption and not – of course – until she has been confirmed.

Nobody has to my knowledge suggested that *Elsie, the Blind Flower Girl* has any literary merit, but the immediate reception of Nydia was highly positive. The reviewer of *Last Days* for a women’s magazine, *The Court Magazine and Belle assemblée* (November 1834, 217), wrote that she ‘is a beautiful conception, and quite original. She wins our love by her artlessness and her generosity’. For *The Athenaeum*’s reviewer, she was ‘the sweet blind girl’, ‘beautifully conceived’ (362, Sept 1834, 707). In an appreciation of Bulwer’s novels in *The Quarterly Review* (134, issue 268, April 1873, 487–515) it was observed that, ‘Schoolboys read it with avidity, and German scholars quote it’ (496). As for

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

254 Helen King

---

Nydia, she ‘stands out in bold relief’ and ‘her blindness gives her an individuality of her own’, even if sometimes ‘the sentiment is too refined, too modern’ (497).

Nydia’s most famous afterlife is in a statue by American sculptor Randolph Rogers (Fig. 10.2). The original model is from 1855, the eve of the Civil War, and there are both near-life-size 55-inch versions and smaller, 36-inch ones (Harris 2007, 197; Kovacs 2013, 37–8). It was a very popular sculpture; Rogers made around 100 copies, and a block on lower Fifth Avenue apparently had seven of the 55-inch statues (Kovacs 2013, 38–9). The rendition of the story ‘as’ ancient sculpture may confuse viewers who assume that there is a classical origin for it.



Figure 10.2 *Nydia*, by Randolph Rogers. ‘Nydia, the blind flower girl of Pompeii, Metropolitan Museum of Art’ by cphoffman42 is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

A history of our own? 255

Nydia's eyes are closed, and her hand is to her ear: she is listening, but the posture also emphasises that she cannot see. She has a cane to help her move about. It is left open here whether she is separated from Glaucus and Ione or is leading them to safety; her isolation as a figure may suggest the former. The broken piece of a Corinthian column stands in for the destruction of Pompeii.

Elsie dies young, but Nydia's more mature sexuality is clear from her right breast escaping from her dress, and Jon Seydl has suggested that we should also see her clothing in terms of what he calls 'the labial folds of the clinging drapery' (Seydl 2011, 219). Displayed at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia alongside Rogers's *Ruth Gleaning* (1853), according to one critic 'The Ruth ... did not attract a tithe of the attention that the Nydia did, and did not awaken a tithe of the admiration' (Lessing 2011, 44, citing Clark 1978, 75). In 1865, however, when the rich plantation owner Adelia Acklen was selecting sculptures for her home, she took Rogers's Ruth rather than his Nydia; Lauren Lessing suggest that perhaps this was because Nydia is presented as having too much of an active role here, rather than offering 'a pleasing, passive, feminine ideal' that fitted with cultural ideas of what a woman should be like and that would, thus, help Acklen's own reputation (Lessing 2011, 4).

It is clear even from the websites of the various museums that house a copy of this statue that it can be read in different ways. The Chicago Art Institute website states that, 'Randolph Rogers captured Nydia as she gropes her way through the burning city' (Art Institute Chicago, n.d.). That 'gropes her way', implying blindness as disability, contrasts strongly with Bulwer-Lytton's text in which she uses her staff 'with great dexterity' (Bulwer-Lytton 1834, 44) and also misses the whole point of the story: in the destruction of Pompeii, she is no longer at a disadvantage – the reverse, in fact, as her sense of hearing is superior to that of her companions. Bulwer-Lytton described her 'incredible dexterity' as she moved through the streets, 'so blessed now was that accustomed darkness, so afflicting in ordinary life' (Bulwer-Lytton 1834, 404). If we are supposed to imagine her separated from Glaucus and Ione, and listening for their voices, then her isolation is not a sign of her weakness, as she remains the one on whom they must rely for their safety. This point is made in the online description from another American university holding one of the sculptures, the University of Michigan: although the city is darkened by the ash blocking out the sun, 'Since Nydia is blind, she is still able to navigate the streets' (University of Michigan Museum of Art 2018, n.p.).

Not everyone loved Nydia, especially in the later twentieth century. In 1974, as Leanne Hunnings noted,

Kenneth Jernigan of The National Federation of the Blind ... railed against this portrayal of the sightless Nydia as a literary character. He argues that she contributes to the perpetuation of the myth of the blind as 'dehumanized', and the manipulation of blindness for an aesthetic and commercialized aim.

Hunnings (2011, 201)

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

256 Helen King

---

Jernigan, a blind activist, gave addresses to the 1973 and 1974 Annual Conventions of the US National Federation of the Blind on the themes of history and literature, respectively, attacking ‘the image of blindness as dehumanization, a kind of banishment from the world of normal life and relationships’. He held up for particular attention ‘the saccharine sweet that has robbed us of humanity and made the legend and hurt our cause’ (Jernigan 1974, n.p.). He referred to a range of characters including ‘Caleb, the “little blind seer” of James Ludlow’s awful novel, “Deborah”. There is Bertha, Dickens’s ineffably sweet and noble blind heroine of “The Cricket on the Hearth”, who comes off almost as an imbecile.’ And there he named ‘the self-sacrificing Nydia, in “The Last Days of Pompeii” calling such characters ‘sweetness without light, and literature without enlightenment’. Blindness in literature, for Jernigan, is

dehumanization, a kind of banishment from the world of normal life and relationships. Neither Dickens’ blind Bertha, nor Bulwer-Lytton’s Nydia, when they find themselves in love, have the slightest idea that anybody could ever love them back – nor does the reader.

It is true that Nydia, despite her depth of emotion, is unable to believe in herself as the object of love. A more recent analysis by Martha Stoddard Holmes suggests instead that Nydia is ‘too feeling, too expressive and potentially too sexual for matrimony’ (Holmes 2004, 39).

Leanne Hunnings noted that, from the Victorian period onwards, some women were turning Nydia’s passivity into their own action. Nydia’s song ‘The Wind and the Beam loved the Rose’ (Bulwer-Lytton 1834, 159) formed the basis of various musical compositions to be ‘performed by young women in drawing-rooms’, and ‘classroom plays for educating the young’ were also created from Bulwer-Lytton’s novel (Hunings 2011, 181–2). An even more active Nydia appears in an exercise designed by museum educator Anne Kindseth for the Art Institute of Chicago (Kindseth 2006). Describing the sculpture in a short piece for a journal aimed at teachers involved with art education, Kindseth produces an active Nydia who searches for her lost companions: ‘Her body strains forward and her hand cups her ear as she desperately, and daringly, tries to listen for her lost friends’. Kindseth set an activity for those interacting with the sculpture:

### Activity

*How do you think this woman feels? What makes you think that? Pose your body like Nydia. How do you feel standing this way? Think of a story that you would like to tell about an event in your life. Become a living sculpture by posing your body to convey the emotion of your story. Be sure to include props to help tell your story.*

# T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

A history of our own? 257

## Conclusion

In both formal histories and in imaginative engagement with the Classics, the stories we tell are forms of classical reception. Disability histories use the classical world in a number of ways, depending to some extent on whether they are written by those with the disability or by medical professionals. Greek and Roman history may feature as one source of stories of inspirational individuals, and, although the acknowledged ‘great names’ of the canon will often feature as ‘discoverers’, there is often little concern with the details of ancient vocabulary. Here, as elsewhere in histories of medicine and the body, Hippocrates is often seen as ‘right’, even if the medicine of the past did not realise this. The emphasis tends to be placed on continuity, giving the reassurance that what is being experienced now was also experienced then and offering a ‘special connection’ to the past, although it may also be suggested that the outcomes are far better today. The sense of continuity can also extend to myth, with characters from Greek and Roman myth being used to represent conditions or those who have them. In the case of Nydia, an imagined figure from the ancient world can be someone to pity, or to admire, with the enthusiasm for her literary and artistic representations varying over time. Although mythical or fictional stories may offer images of disability that are unhelpful to those who live with that condition, they have the potential to be used to foreground those with disability or to allow imaginative identification with a condition that the viewer or user does not share.

## Notes

- 1 A revised version of this blog post appears as Bottrell 2015b. The connections between Bottrell’s multiple blogs can be difficult to unravel, but see <http://hardluckasthma.blogspot.com/2016/06/new-asthma-history-blog.html> for some explanation.
- 2 Most of the pharmacy treatises associated with the name ‘Mesue’ were probably written in the eleventh century or later, perhaps in thirteenth-century Bologna, and were based on the Arabic pharmacological tradition (De Vos 2013, 683, 685). The earliest manuscripts of ‘the divine Mesue’ date to 1281 (De Vos 2013, 671).
- 3 The author cites Dols, *Medieval Islamic Medicine* (1984), here, but I have not found this passage in that book.

## References

- Adams, Ellen (2020) ‘Deafness: sensory impairment as communication disability, past and present.’ In Christian Laes (ed.), *A Cultural History of Disability in Antiquity*. London: Bloomsbury, 85–100.
- Al-Rāzī (Rhazes) (1955–68) *Kitāb al-Hāwī fī l-ṭibb*, 23 vols, Hyderabad: Osmania Oriental Publications Bureau.
- Anon. (1868) *Elsie, the Blind Flower Girl; A story of the Sheltering Arms*. New York: General Protestant Episcopal Sunday School Union and Church Book Society.
- Apostolides, Panos (1997) *Ear, Nose and Throat Diseases in Hippocrates*. Athens: UCB Pharma.

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

258 Helen King

---

- Art Institute Chicago (n.d.) 'Nydia, the blind flower girl of Pompeii', [www.artic.edu/artworks/2446/nydia-the-blind-flower-girl-of-pompeii](http://www.artic.edu/artworks/2446/nydia-the-blind-flower-girl-of-pompeii) (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Atkin, Alison (2015) 'No longer deaf to the past.' *History Today* 3 December 2015, [www.historytoday.com/no-longer-deaf-past](http://www.historytoday.com/no-longer-deaf-past) (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Batt, Ronald E. (2009) 'Emergence of endometriosis in North America: a study in the history of ideas.' PhD thesis, State University of New York at Buffalo.
- Bauman, H-Dirksen L. (2008) 'On the disconstruction of (sign) language in the Western tradition: a deaf reading of Plato's Cratylus.' In H-Dirksen L. Bauman (ed.), *Open Your Eyes: Deaf Studies Talking*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 127–145.
- Binder, S. (1991) 'Endometriosis: the "career woman's disease".' *Total Health Magazine* 13(2), 37.
- Bostock, John and Henry T. Riley (1857) *The Natural History of Pliny, Book VI*. London: Henry G. Bohn.
- Bottrell, John (2013a) '2697 B.C.: The oldest description of asthma (sort of).' <http://astmahistory.blogspot.com/2013/10/2697-bc-oldest-description-of-asthma.html> (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Bottrell, John (2013b) '460–370 B.C.: What did Hippocrates think about asthma?' <http://astmahistory.blogspot.com/2014/05/460-370-bc-what-did-hippocrates-think.html> (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Bottrell, John (2015a) '4 B.C. to 65 A.D.: Seneca learns to cope with asthma.' <http://respiratorytherapycave.blogspot.com/2015/05/4-bc-to-65-ad-seneca-learns-to-cope.html> (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Bottrell, John (2015b) '62 B.C.: Seneca the asthma philosopher.' <http://astmahistory.blogspot.com/2015/07/62-bc-seneca-asthma-philosopher.html> (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Bottrell, John (n.d.) 'Asthma timeline.' <http://astmahistory.blogspot.com/p/asthma.html> (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Brosens, Ivo and Giuseppe Benagiano (2011) 'Endometriosis, a modern syndrome.' *Indian Journal of Medical Research* 133(6), 581–593.
- Bulwer-Lytton, Edward (1834) *The Last Days of Pompeii*. Paris: Baudry's European Library.
- Cannizzaro, Theresa (2017) 'History of asthma (part one) – In the beginning.' <https://asthma.net/living/history-of-asthma-part-one-in-the-beginning/> (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Clark, William J. Jr (1978) *Great American Sculptors*. Philadelphia: Gebbie & Barrie.
- Cotto, Bob (2008) 'Who discovered asthma Hippocrates or Galen?' <https://ezinearticles.com/?Who-Discovered-Asthma-Hippocrates-Or-Galen?&id=1381520> (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Crivellato, Enrico, Luciana Traban and Domenico Ribatti (2007) 'The Hippocratic treatise "On glands": the first document on lymphoid tissue and lymph nodes.' *Leukemia* 21, 591–592. [www.nature.com/articles/2404618](http://www.nature.com/articles/2404618) (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Cserháti, Endre (2004) 'The history of bronchial asthma from the ancient times till the Middle Ages.' *Acta Physiologica Hungarica* 91(3–4), 243–261. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/a55f/8e484d42d9364d61713c1c066e13847eb94c.pdf> (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Daly, Nicholas (2011) 'The volcanic disaster narrative: from pleasure garden to canvas, page, and stage.' *Victorian Studies* 53(2), 255–285.
- De Vos, Paula (2013) 'The "Prince of Medicine". Yūḥannā ibn Māsawayh and the foundations of the western pharmaceutical tradition.' *Isis* 104(4), 667–712.
- Endometriosis UK (2017) 'Endometriosis – is it a disability?' [www.endometriosis-uk.org/news/endometriosis-it-disability-37511#.XhXIdRf7TUI](http://www.endometriosis-uk.org/news/endometriosis-it-disability-37511#.XhXIdRf7TUI) (accessed 18 April 2020).



# T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

A history of our own? 259

- Enovid (1962) 'Enovid: the first complete physiologic regulator of female cyclic function.' [advertisement]. *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 86, 1183. [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1849248/pdf/canmedaj00949-0052.pdf](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1849248/pdf/canmedaj00949-0052.pdf) (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Epilepsy Canada (2016) 'History of epilepsy.' [www.epilepsy.ca/history-of-epilepsy.html](http://www.epilepsy.ca/history-of-epilepsy.html) (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Estonian Association of the Deaf (2010) 'Foreign deaf history.' [http://ead.ee/foreign\\_deaf\\_history?fbclid=IwAR1sH\\_WPQELgrYxeQ0pYrEYgdppQAWimtcRL-zetOKVUQ6bVMAQT0HrhunE](http://ead.ee/foreign_deaf_history?fbclid=IwAR1sH_WPQELgrYxeQ0pYrEYgdppQAWimtcRL-zetOKVUQ6bVMAQT0HrhunE) (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Felman, Adam (2018) 'A brief history of asthma.' [www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/323526.php](http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/323526.php) (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Felton, Debbie (2012) 'Rejecting and embracing the monstrous in ancient Greece and Rome.' In Asa S. Mittman and Peter Dendle (eds), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous*. Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate Press, 103–131.
- Ferreri, Giulio (1906) 'The deaf in antiquity.' Translated into English for *American Annals of the Deaf* 51, 460–473.
- Finke, Beth (2017) '50 years after its debut, a blind actor is cast in "Wait Until Dark".' <https://blog.easterseals.com/50-years-after-its-debut-a-blind-actor-is-cast-in-wait-until-dark/> (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Floyer, John (1715) *Psychrolousia, or, the History of Cold Bathing: Both Ancient and Modern. Part 1* (4th edn). London: printed for William Innys.
- Fowler, Edmund P. (1993) 'The second one hundred years, musings and dreams of things to come.' In *History of the American Otological Society, Inc, 1868–1993: Six Score and Five Years of Progress* (printed by the Society), 88–90.
- Fowler, Harold N. (1921) *Plato: Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Frea, Rick (2011) '62 B.C.: Seneca the asthma philosopher [sic].' <http://hardluckasthma.blogspot.com/2011/12/62-bc-seneca-asthma-philosopher.html> (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Garretson, Mervin D. (1981) 'Introduction.' In Jack R. Gannon, *Deaf Heritage: A Narrative History of Deaf America*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, xxi. <http://gupress.gallaudet.edu/excerpts/DHintro.html> (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Green, Monica H. (2001) *The Trotula: A Medieval Compendium of Women's Medicine*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Gross, Izhak (1981) 'Parliament and the abolition of negro apprenticeship 1835–1838.' *English Historical Review* 96, 560–576.
- Harrington, Thomas (2006) 'Earliest known deaf people (to 1700 AD).' <https://web.archive.org/web/20071012084125/http://library.gallaudet.edu/deaf-faq-earliest-deaf.shtml> (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Harris, Judith (2007) *Pompeii Awakened: A Story of Rediscovery*. London and New York: I.B. Tauris.
- Hawkins, Joseph E. (2004) 'Sketches of otophology: Part 1 – otoprehistory: how it all began.' *Audiology and Neurotology* 9, 66–71.
- Hawkins, Joseph E. and Jochen Schacht (2008) *Sketches of Otophology*. Basle: Karger.
- Helmbold, William C. (1939) *Plutarch, Moralia*. Vol. 6. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hett, Walter S. (1957) *Aristotle: On the soul, Parva naturalia, On breath*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

260 Helen King

---

- Higginbotham, Peter (n.d.) 'Children's homes and institutions in New York, USA.' [www.childrenshomes.org.uk/list/NewYork.shtml?LMCL=mo8hwhf&LMCL=NLFA8\\_](http://www.childrenshomes.org.uk/list/NewYork.shtml?LMCL=mo8hwhf&LMCL=NLFA8_) (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Holgate, Stephen T. (2010) 'A brief history of asthma and its mechanisms to modern concepts of disease pathogenesis.' *Allergy Asthma & Immunology Research* 2(3), 165–171. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4168%2Faaair.2010.2.3.165>
- Holmes, Martha S. (2004) *Fictions of Affliction: Physical Disability in Victorian Culture*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- How to Use Inhalers (2012) 'Who discovered asthma?' <https://use-inhalers.com/who-discovered-asthma> (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Hunnings, Leanne (2011) 'Between victimhood and agency: Nydia the slave in Bulwer's The Last Days of Pompeii.' In Edith Hall, Richard Alston and Justine McConnell (eds), *Ancient Slavery and Abolition: From Hobbes to Hollywood*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 181–207.
- Jackson, Mark (2006) *Allergy: The History of a Modern Malady*. London: Reaktion Books.
- Jackson, Mark (2009) *Asthma: The Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jernigan, Kenneth (1974) 'Blindness: is literature against us?' Address delivered at the National Federation of the Blind Banquet, July 3 1974. [www.nfb.org/images/nfb/publications/convent/banque74.htm](http://www.nfb.org/images/nfb/publications/convent/banque74.htm) (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Jouanna, Jacques (2012a) 'Disease as aggression in the Hippocratic Corpus and Greek tragedy: wild and devouring disease.' In Jacques Jouanna, *Greek Medicine from Hippocrates to Galen: Selected Papers*. Leiden: Brill, 81–96.
- Jouanna, Jacques (2012b) 'Hippocratic medicine and Greek tragedy.' In Jacques Jouanna, *Greek Medicine from Hippocrates to Galen: Selected Papers*. Leiden: Brill, 55–80.
- Junod, Suzanne W. and Lara Marks (2002) 'Women's trials: the approval of the first oral contraceptive pill in the United States and Great Britain.' *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 57(2), 117–160.
- Karamanou, Marianna and George Androustos (2011) 'Aretaeus of Cappadocia and the first clinical description of asthma.' *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine* 184(12). <https://doi.org/10.1164/ajrccm.184.12.1420b> (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Keeney, Edmund L. (1964) 'The history of asthma from Hippocrates to Meltzer.' *Journal of Allergy* 35, 215–226.
- Kindseth, Anne (2006) 'Randolph Rogers. Nydia, the blind flower girl of Pompeii.' *School Arts* 105(7). <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A142870861/AONE?u=tou&sid=AONE&xid=e0670c2d> (accessed 18 April 2020).
- King, Helen (1993) 'Once upon a text: the Hippocratic origins of hysteria.' In Sander Gilman, Helen King, Roy Porter, G.S. Rousseau and Elaine Showalter (eds), *Hysteria Beyond Freud*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press, 3–90.
- King, Helen (2005) 'Women's health and recovery in the Hippocratic corpus.' In Helen King (ed.), *Health in Antiquity*. London: Routledge, 150–161.
- King, Helen (2019) *Hippocrates Now: The 'Father of Medicine' in the Internet Age*. London: Bloomsbury.
- King, Jean R. and Sheldon G. Cohen (2001) 'Asthma among the famous. Augustus Caesar (63 B.C.–A.D. 14) first emperor of Rome.' *Allergy and Asthma Proceedings* 22(2), 101–109.

# T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

A history of our own? 261

- Kovacs, Claire L. (2013) 'Pompeii and its material reproductions: the rise of a tourist site in the nineteenth century.' *Journal of Tourism History* 5(1), 25–49.
- Kühn, Karl G. (1965) *Claudii Galeni Opera omnia*. Vol. 12. Hildesheim: G. Olms.
- Laes, Christian (2018) *Disabilities and the Disabled in the Roman World: A Social and Cultural History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Langworthy, Jessica L. (1930) 'Blindness in fiction: a study of the attitude of authors towards their blind characters.' *Journal of Applied Psychology* 14, 269–286.
- Lessing, Lauren (2011) 'Angels in the home: Adelia Acklen's sculpture collection at Belmont Mansion, Nashville, Tennessee.' *Winterthur Portfolio* 45(1), 29–60.
- Lichtenthaler, Charles (1965) *Thucydide et Hippocrate vus par un historien-médecin*. Geneva: Librairie Droz.
- LiDonnici, Lynn R. (1995) *The Epidaurian Miracle Inscriptions: Text, Translation and Commentary*. Texts and Translations 36; Graeco-Roman Religion Series I I. Atlanta: Scholars Press.
- Marketos, Spyros G. and Constantine N. Ballas (1982) 'Bronchial asthma in the medical literature of Greek antiquity.' *Journal of Asthma* 19, 263–269.
- Miller, Brian R. (2014) 'History of the blind.' Encyclopaedia Britannica online, [www.britannica.com/topic/history-of-the-blind-1996241](http://www.britannica.com/topic/history-of-the-blind-1996241) (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities (2019) 'Parallels in Time: A history of developmental disabilities.' <http://mn.gov/mnddc/parallels/one/2.html> (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Mitra, Anita (2017) 'What is endometriosis?' [www.gynaeegeek.com/the-blog/2017/9/6/what-is-endometriosis](http://www.gynaeegeek.com/the-blog/2017/9/6/what-is-endometriosis) (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Moormann, Eric (2015) *Pompeii's Ashes: The Reception of the Cities Buried by Vesuvius in literature, music, and drama*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Nezhat, Camran, Farr Nezhat and Ceana Nezhat. (2012) 'Endometriosis: ancient disease, ancient treatments.' *Fertility and Sterility* 98(65), 1–62.
- Nogueira, João F. Júnior, Diego Rodrigo Hermann, Ronaldo dos Reis Américo, Iulo Sérgio Barauna Filho, Aldo Eden Cassol Stamm, and Shirley Shizuo Nagata Pignatari (2007) 'A brief history of otorhinolaryngology: otology, laryngology and rhinology.' *Revista Brasileira de Otorrinolaringologia* 73(5), 693–703. [www.scielo.br/scielo.php?pid=s0034-72992007000500017&script=sci\\_arttext&tlng=en](http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?pid=s0034-72992007000500017&script=sci_arttext&tlng=en) (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Omvig, Jim (2019) 'History of blindness: summary of the history of the education and rehabilitation of the blind.' <https://actionfund.org/history-blindness> (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Page, Denys L. (1953) 'Thucydides' description of the Great Plague at Athens.' *Classical Quarterly* 3, 97–119.
- Panzani, Raphael C. (1988) 'Seneca and his asthma: the illnesses, life and death of a Roman stoic philosopher.' *Journal of Asthma* 25, 163–174.
- Paquette, Penny (2003) *Asthma: The Ultimate Teen Guide*. Oxford: Scarecrow Press.
- Patel, H.H. (2019) 'Asthma history.' [www.news-medical.net/health/Asthma-History.aspx](http://www.news-medical.net/health/Asthma-History.aspx) (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Payne, Arnold H. (1911) 'Deaf and dumb.' [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1911\\_Encyclop%C3%A6dia\\_Britannica/Deaf\\_and\\_Dumb](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1911_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica/Deaf_and_Dumb) (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Politzer, Adam (1907) *Geschichte der Ohrenheilkunde*. Vol. I. Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke.
- Psfidis, Anestis (2006) 'The prehistory of audiology and otology.' *Mediterranean Journal of Otolology* 2, 41–46.

## T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

262 Helen King

---

- Quayson, Ato (2007) *Aesthetic Nervousness: Disability and the Crisis of Representation*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Reynolds, Edward H. (2005) 'Milestones in the history of epilepsy.' *WHO Epilepsy Atlas*. Geneva: WHO, 16–19. [www.who.int/mental\\_health/neurology/Epilepsy\\_atlas\\_r1.pdf](http://www.who.int/mental_health/neurology/Epilepsy_atlas_r1.pdf) (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Richardson, Mark A. (1999) 'Sore throat, tonsillitis, and adenoiditis.' *Medical Clinics of North America* 83(1), 75–83. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0025-7125\(05\)70088-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0025-7125(05)70088-2) (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Robinson, Victor (1941) 'Examination in the history of otology.' *The Laryngoscope* 51(4), 315–316.
- Ryan, Michael (1793) *Observations on the History and Cure of the Asthma; In which the Propriety of using the Cold Bath in that Disorder is Fully Considered*. London: printed for G.G.J. & J. Robinson.
- Sakula, Alex (1988) 'A history of asthma.' *Journal of the Royal College of Physicians* 22, 35–44.
- Sanmiguel, Lisa M. (2000) 'From "career woman's" disease to "an epidemic ignored": endometriosis in United States culture since 1948.' PhD thesis, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
- Saxena, Surabhi (2019) 'Weird asthma cures you didn't know about!' <https://cashkaro.com/blog/weird-asthma-cures-you-didnt-know-about/108240> (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Shiller, Joyce K. (1993) 'Nydia: a forgotten icon of the nineteenth century.' *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts* 67(4), 36–45.
- Seydl, Jon L. (2011) 'Experiencing the last days of Pompeii in late nineteenth-century Philadelphia.' In Shelley Hales and Joanna Paul (eds), *Pompeii in the Public Imagination from Its Rediscovery to Today*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 215–231.
- Shaner, Wendy (2013) 'Deaf culture timeline.' <https://signlanguageco.com/deaf-culture-timeline/> (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Sharman, Caroline (1996) 'Nineteenth-century views of blindness and deafness and Jane Eyre.' [www.victorianweb.org/authors/bronte/cbronte/sharman10.html](http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/bronte/cbronte/sharman10.html) (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Sutton, Christopher (2006) 'The history of endometriosis.' In Christopher Sutton, Kevin Jones and G. David Adamson (eds), *Modern Management of Endometriosis*. London and New York: Taylor & Francis, 3–16.
- Thorpe, J.R. (2015) 'A cure for asthma might be closer than you'd think, new study finds.' [www.bustle.com/articles/93817-a-cure-for-asthma-might-be-closer-than-you-d-think-new-study-finds](http://www.bustle.com/articles/93817-a-cure-for-asthma-might-be-closer-than-you-d-think-new-study-finds) (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Traynor, Robert (2015) 'International giants of otology: the earliest years.' <http://hearinghealthmatters.org/hearinginternational/2015/international-giants-of-otology-the-pioneers> (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Trentin, Lisa (2011) 'Deformity in the Roman imperial court.' *Greece & Rome* 58(2), 195–208.
- Tuinstra, Stephanie (2001) 'Disability timeline.' [www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/tbacig/studproj/is3099/pplfrst/Untitled1.html](http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/tbacig/studproj/is3099/pplfrst/Untitled1.html) (accessed 18 April 2020).
- University of Michigan Museum of Art (2018) 'Nydia, the blind flower girl of Pompeii.' <https://exchange.umma.umich.edu/resources/9627/view> (accessed 18 April 2020).
- Vlayen, Joan, Leentje De Bleser, Stephan Devriese and Walter Sermeus (2005) 'The use of clinical pathways in Belgium', KCE Reports 18A, *Prospectief bepalen van de honoraria van ziekenhuisartsen op basis van klinische paden en guidelines*:

# T&F PROOFS NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

A history of our own? 263

---

*makkelijker gezegd dan gedaan*, 34–56. [https://kce.fgov.be/sites/default/files/atoms/files/d20051027319\\_0.pdf](https://kce.fgov.be/sites/default/files/atoms/files/d20051027319_0.pdf) (accessed 18 April 2020).

## Note

- 1 My most startling experience of this occurred in the Old Bailey, when presenting myself for jury service. The very heart and symbol of our legal system struggled with its obligations to enact reasonable adjustments (cf. 2010 Equality Act). As a result of the subsequent lively discussion, I suspect that I am now permanently excused from being called up.