

locations through metaphor, for example Titchener's embodiment of mind in locating empathy in the "mind's muscle"—a way of saying that we are *moved* by things.

Recall two events mentioned earlier—the sacrifice of the princes, and throwing Hector's baby son from the walls of Troy (the latter episode not in the *Iliad* but known to the audience and haunting the scene with Andromache described above). The *Iliad* is full of savagery—the killing of enemies by painful and grotesque means; boasting over the corpse; refusing to spare the life of a helpless foe. It is a small step to label those who do savage deeds as "savages", or "primitives". Yet our own killing is savage, but done by others, usually at a distance, usually unseen. In the film *Troy*, Hollywood rewrites classical mythology to avoid unpleasantness and sweeten a pill too bitter for modern audiences. In the scene between Hector and Andromache, Hector shows her a secret way out of Troy and, at the end of the film we see her and the baby escaping. Hollywood does not want to know about its heroines led off to concubinage, and babies hurled from city walls. Yet such events still happen. Even if empathy could be taught, would it be fair to our students? Would not classes in narcissism and self-interest be of greater benefit? There has been no evolution, no progress in our moral sensitivity. Pity, sympathy, empathy and compassion have been examined formally in medical education for only half a century.³¹ The stories of Greece and Rome resonate with us still and can inform our ethical practice.

Acknowledgements: We would like to thank our students for keeping us on our toes.

Competing interests: None.

REFERENCES

1. Calasso R. *The marriage of Cadmus and Harmony*. London: Vintage, 1994:103.
2. Stern DT, ed. *Measuring medical professionalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
3. General Medical Council. *Good medical practice*. GMC UK, 2006.
4. Marshall RJ, Bleakley A. Putting it bluntly: communication skills in the *Iliad*. *Med Humanit* 2008;**34**:30–4.
5. Monro DB, Allen TW, eds. *The Iliad*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1920, 3rd edn. (All translations in this paper are by RJM)
6. Kleinman A. *The illness narratives: suffering, healing and the human condition*. New York: Basic Books Inc., 1988.
7. Coulter A. *The autonomous patient: ending paternalism in medical care*. London: The Stationery Office, 2002.
8. Roter DL, Hall JA. Doctors talking with patients/patients talking with doctors: improving communication in medical visits. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2nd edn, 2006.
9. General Medical Council. *The new doctor 2007*. GMC UK, 2007.
10. Klamen D, Williams R. Using standardized clinical encounters to assess physician communication. In: Stern DT, ed. *Measuring medical professionalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006:53–74.
11. Veloski J, Hojat M. Measuring specific elements of professionalism: empathy, teamwork, and lifelong learning. In: Stern DT, ed. *Measuring medical professionalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006:117–46.
12. Spiro HM, McCrear MG, Curnen EP, et al, eds. *Empathy and the practice of medicine: beyond pills and the scalpel*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993.
13. Wispé L. *The psychology of sympathy*. Kluwer/Plenum, 1991:78
14. Greene G. *The ministry of fear: an entertainment*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1993.
15. LaCombe MA. Letters of intent. In: Spiro HM, McCrear MG, Curnen EP, et al, eds. *Empathy and the practice of medicine: beyond pills and the scalpel*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993:54–66.
16. Halpern J. *From detached concern to empathy: humanizing medical practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
17. Fredrick D. Introduction: invisible Rome. In: Fredrick D, ed. *The Roman gaze: vision, power, and the body*. Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002:1–30.
18. Plato. Meno trs. WKC Guthrie. In: *Protagoras and Meno*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1956.
19. Arnold L, Stern DT. What is medical professionalism? In: Stern DT, ed. *Measuring medical professionalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006:15–37.
20. Hawhee D. *Bodily arts: rhetoric and athletics in ancient Greece*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2004.
21. Padel R. *In and out of the mind: Greek images of the tragic self*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992.
22. Padel R. *Whom gods destroy: elements of Greek and tragic madness*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995.
23. Foucault M. *The hermeneutics of the subject: lectures at the Collège de France 1981–2*. New York: Picador, 2005.
24. Tatum J. *The mourner's song: war and remembrance from the Iliad to Vietnam*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004:165 and note.
25. Macleod CW. *Homer: Iliad, Book 24*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985:8–11.
26. Schein SL. *The mortal hero*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984:168–95.
27. Hojat M, Gonnelle JS, Nasca TJ, et al. Physician empathy: definition, components, measurement, and relationship to gender and specialty. *Am J Psych* 2002;**159**:1563–9.
28. Hojat M, Gonnelle JS, Mangione S, et al. Empathy in medical students as related to academic performance, clinical competence and gender. *Med Educ* 2002;**36**:522–7
29. Hojat M, Mangione S, Nasca TJ, et al. An empirical study of decline in empathy in medical school. *Med Educ* 2004;**38**:934–41.
30. Onians RB. *The origins of European thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988:23–89.
31. Wilmer HA. The doctor-patient relationship and issues of pity, sympathy and empathy. *Br J Med Psychol* 1968;**41**:243–8.

Correction

There was an error in the title of an article published in the December 2008 issue of the journal (Elliott C. The Best of the Belleville Literary Review. *J Med Ethics; Medical Humanities* 2008;**34**:117). The correct title of the book should be "The Best of the Bellevue Literary Review".

J Med Ethics; Medical Humanities 2009;**35**:12. doi:10.1136/jmh.2008.000661corr1