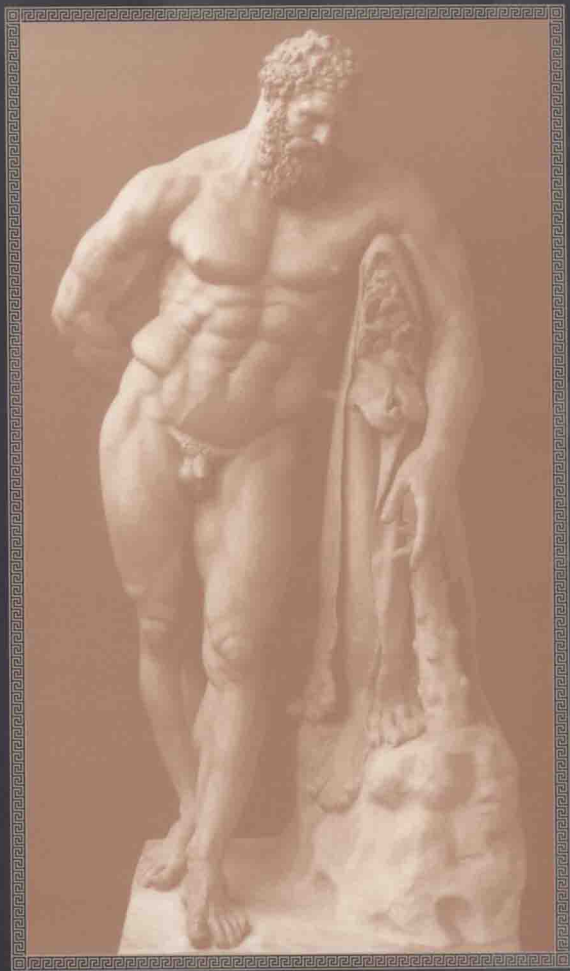


# GREEK LITERATURE AND THE ROMAN EMPIRE

THE POLITICS OF IMITATION



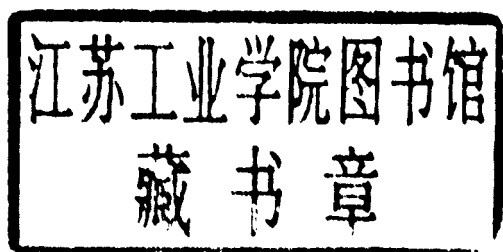
TIM WHITMARSH

OXFORD

# Greek Literature and the Roman Empire

The Politics of Imitation

TIM WHITMARSH



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## Preface

WHEN, in the early 1990s, I first turned my attention to the literature of Roman Greece, most publications on the subject seemed to begin with an apology for a deviation from the traditional path of Classical scholarship (which also functioned as an advertisement for the author's ground-breaking foray). Now it is almost as though one needs to apologize for adding to the quantity of works on the subject, many of which are extremely erudite and thought-provoking. There remains, however, a need for a book that supplements the now familiar, historiographical emphasis upon Greek identity (in relation to the Greek past and in relation to Rome), with an awareness of the subtlety and literary panache of much Roman Greek writing. It is the central contention of this book that these two approaches are mutually dependent: it is impossible to consider Greek identity without understanding the ingenuity of the authors, and it is undesirable to consider literary aesthetics in isolation from the circuits of 'power' (however we choose to define that shibboleth of contemporary academia).

All dates are CE unless otherwise stated (and I have preferred BCE/CE to BC/AD). English titles for Greek and Latin works are given in the main text, but the conventional Latin abbreviations (as employed in Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon*) are used for footnotes and references. I have retained the familiar Latin spellings of Greek names, rather than attempting to transliterate Greek. Words like 'Akhilleus' and 'Loukianos' are difficult on the eye, and (worse) the practice represents a spurious attempt at authenticity. In a book that often deals with ideological debates concerning links between past and present, any attempted solution to the ongoing problem of representing ancient Greek nomenclature in English risks the charge of disingenuity; but (a sophistic concession) I would rather be open in my disingenuity.

The debts I have incurred during the gestation of this book are many. Let me here acknowledge only those of an intellectual cast. I have benefited immensely from conversations with Rebecca

Langlands, Denise McCoskey, Jon Hesk, Geoff Horrocks, Jason König, and Richard Miles—often, like a parasite, drawing sustenance unbeknown to my hosts. Froma Zeitlin has been ever generous with her penetrating ideas and thoughtful responses. John Kerrigan, Lucy Grig, Jeff Rusten, and Malcolm Schofield gave me invaluable help with specific issues. I owe most to those who read part or all of this work at various stages: to Teresa Morgan, Julie Lewis, Pat Easterling, Ewen Bowie, Christopher Kelly, Jaś Elsner, the anonymous readers for the Press; and, in particular, to Simon Goldhill, Richard Hunter, and John Henderson, who read the entire manuscript. The book, such as it is (notwithstanding the traditional pieties about errors remaining), would have been inconceivable without this help.

Hilary O'Shea and the staff at Oxford University Press (not to mention their excellent copy-editors) have been extremely supportive throughout the gestation of this work. I must also thank the Faculty of Classics at Cambridge, as much the epicentre of Classical learning as I am its least deserving beneficiary; and, most of all, St John's College, a most supportive and stimulating environment in which to think and write. I am immensely grateful to the Master and Fellows for the faith they have shown in me.

T.J.G.W.

*St John's College Cambridge*  
*September 2000*

## Acknowledgements

MUCH of Chapter 3 is reworked from Whitmarsh (2001). Certain sections of Chapter 4 also previously appeared in Whitmarsh (1998*a*). My sincere thanks to Cambridge University Press for their kind permission to reuse this material.

Chapter 3 also contains passages first published in *JHS* 119 (1999) (Whitmarsh 1999*a*). I am grateful to the Hellenic Society for their co-operation in republication.

## Abbreviations

In footnotes and references, Greek and Latin authors and works are cited conventionally.

- CAH*<sup>3</sup> I. E. S. Edwards *et al.*, *The Cambridge ancient history*, 3rd edn. (Cambridge, 1970- )
- CHCL* P. E. Easterling *et al.*, *The Cambridge history of classical literature*, vol. 1: *Greek literature* (Cambridge, 1985)
- CIL* T. Mommsen *et al.*, eds., *Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum* (Berlin, 1863- )
- DK* H. Diels and W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 6th edn. (Berlin, 1951-2)
- EG* G. Kaibel, ed., *Epigrammata Graeca ex lapidibus collecta* (Berlin, 1878)
- FGE* D. L. Page, ed., *Further Greek epigrams: epigrams before A.D. 50 from the Greek anthology and other sources, not included in Hellenistic epigrams or The garland of Philip*, revised and prepared for publication by R. D. Dawe and J. Diggle (Cambridge, 1981)
- FGH* F. Jacoby *et al.*, eds., *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (Berlin, 1923- )
- FHE* *Fondation Hardt pour l'étude de l'antiquité classique: entretiens* (Geneva)
- FPL* J. Blänsdorf, ed., *Fragmenta poetarum Latinorum epicorum et lyricorum praeter Ennium et Lucilium* (Leipzig, 1995)
- IG*<sup>2</sup> F. H. de Gaertingen *et al.*, eds., *Inscriptiones Graecae*, 2nd edn. (Berlin, 1924- )
- KA* R. Kassel and C. Austin, eds., *Poetae comici Graeci* (Berlin, 1983- )
- KRS* G. S. Kirk, J. Raven, and M. Schofield, *The presocratic philosophers: a critical history with a selection of texts*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge, 1983)

LS	A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, <i>The Hellenistic philosophers</i> (Cambridge, 1987)
LSJ	H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, <i>et al.</i> , <i>A Greek-English lexicon</i> , 9th edn. (Oxford, 1996)
N <sup>2</sup>	A. Nauck, ed., <i>Tragicorum graecorum fragmenta</i> , 2nd edn. (Leipzig, 1889)
OGIS	W. Dittenberger, ed., <i>Orientis Graeci inscriptiones selectae: supplementum sylloges inscriptionum Graecarum</i> (Leipzig, 1903-5)
OLD	P. G. W. Glare, ed., <i>Oxford Latin dictionary</i> (Oxford, 1982)
<i>P.Vat.</i>	<i>Vatican papyrus</i>
PLG	T. Bergk, ed., <i>Poetae lyrici Graeci</i> , 4th edn. (Leipzig, 1878-82)
RAC	T. Klauser <i>et al.</i> , eds., <i>Reallexicon für Antike und Christentum</i> (Stuttgart, 1950- )
RE	G. Wissowa <i>et al.</i> , <i>Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> (Munich, 1903-78)
RG	L. Spengel, ed., <i>Rhetores Graeci</i> (Leipzig, 1853-6)
SH	H. Lloyd-Jones and P. Parsons, eds., <i>Supplementum Hellenisticum</i> (Berlin, 1983)
SIG	W. Dittenberger, ed., <i>Sylloge inscriptionum graecarum</i> (Leipzig, 1883)
SVF	H. von Arnim, ed., <i>Stoicorum veterum fragmenta</i> (Leipzig, 1923-4)
TGF	B. Snell <i>et al.</i> , eds., <i>Tragicorum graecorum fragmenta</i> (Göttingen, 1971- )



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# Introduction

## GREEK LITERATURE AND THE ROMAN EMPIRE

This is a book about the Greek literary culture of the period from the mid-first to the early third century of the common era (CE), the revival of Classicizing ideals that modern scholars often call the ‘Second Sophistic’.<sup>1</sup> It seeks to analyse the various associations between ‘Greek literature’ and ‘the Roman empire’. Although my title echoes that of Bowersock’s influential *Greek sophists in the Roman empire*,<sup>2</sup> I have forgone any preposition marking the relationship between the two. Greek literature was not, in my view, ‘in’ or ‘under’ (i.e. contained by, subsumed by) Rome; nor, for that matter, was it ‘above’ or ‘beyond’. Rather, it is the dynamic and mutually productive (and at times destructive) relationship between the two phenomena that forms my central area of interest. ‘And’, which equivocates between conjunction (‘man and wife’) and disjunction (‘chalk and cheese’) seems the most appropriate marker of that complex reciprocity.

The book is an exploration into the cultural and political values of literature. It is not centrally concerned with the material realities of literature, the circulation, ownership, performance, and reading of texts (though these are in fact important and recurrent issues over the course of the argument). Nor is it fundamentally about the politics of literary language, the intense debates over ‘Atticist’ morphology and style in the period (though again, that is a crucial matter that will resurface frequently). Nor is it a complete survey of all the many Greek texts that bear upon Rome. Instead, it focuses upon a central question: how literary experience is constructed and thematized in the texts of this period, and how ‘the

<sup>1</sup> On the history of this term, see Ch. 1, ‘A Secondary Society’. On the phenomenon, see esp. Kaibel (1885); E. Rohde (1886; 1914); Schmid (1887–96); Palm (1959); Bowersock (1969); Bowie (1974; 1982); G. Anderson (1990; 1993); Woolf (1994); Brunt (1994); Swain (1996); Schmitz (1997); Korenjak (2000).

<sup>2</sup> Bowersock (1969).

literary' is employed to construct Greek identity in relationship to the Greek past and the Roman present. The central argument of this book rests on the proposition (hardly contentious now) that literary writing was in this period inherently bound up with the process of negotiation of an identity discrete from Rome. Literary writing was the central (albeit not the only)<sup>3</sup> means of affirming Greekness. Where this book seeks to innovate is in advancing the proposition that authors do not write because they are Greek; they *are Greek because they write*. Literature is an ever incomplete, ever unstable *process* of self-making. Practically all the Greek texts that survive from this period were written by Roman citizens,<sup>4</sup> men whose identity was (I argue) radically fissured. They could not afford to take the word 'and' for granted. Thus it makes no sense to write of 'Rome and the Romans as the Greeks saw them' (to cite the title of a book from the early 1970s):<sup>5</sup> not only was the relationship between 'Greece' and 'Rome' (these terms conceived of as 'imaginary' rather than geopolitical entities) fluid and oscillatory, but also the very concepts of 'Greek' and 'Roman' were under constant definition, scrutiny, review, and redefinition. So far from being self-evident 'givens' that can be assumed to lie anterior to the texts, these notions are effects—and contested effects at that—of literary writing. If the question is 'why the resurgence of interest in Greek literature in this period?', then 'Greek identity' is not the answer but itself part of the problem.

Bowersock's *Greek sophists in the Roman empire* begins with the suggestion that literature has two options, 'acquiescence or dissent', before proceeding to suggest that the Greek sophists took the former path in their relations to Rome.<sup>6</sup> In Bowersock's view, the history of Greek literature in the first three centuries CE shows a progressive subsumption of Greek values into Roman.<sup>7</sup> There are certainly numerous ways in which this proposition might be refined, nuanced, or even opposed in the reading of literary texts: subsequent scholarship has found much more oppositionalism in the texts of Roman Greece.<sup>8</sup> The polarity of acquiescence and

<sup>3</sup> See below, n. 158.

<sup>4</sup> Below, p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> Forte (1972).

<sup>6</sup> Bowersock (1969), 1. Cf. his other work on 'resistance' to Roman rule: (1965), 101–11; (1986).

<sup>7</sup> Bowersock (1994), 29; cf. C. P. Jones (1986), 89.

<sup>8</sup> Bowie has argued that Roman Greek literature represented an attempt to

dissent, however, is reductive and unhelpful. Simon Swain's *Hellenism and empire* has recently challenged this received wisdom with the valuable observation that loyalties can be tangled and at times contradictory: 'only the crude discourse of nationalism' in modern scholarship leads to the assumption that 'the Greek elite must have been pro-Roman in all respects, since they could not otherwise have supported Rome at all'.<sup>9</sup> For Swain, however, these contradictions can be resolved by stratifying levels of intensity: allegiances to Rome may be superficial, whilst what really count are 'the real attitudes of people under foreign rule'.<sup>10</sup> Swain argues that the authors he studies have a primarily Greek 'cultural-cognitive' identity, and objectify Rome as an alien (and at times oppressive) presence. Thus, while he (rightly) refuses to mark any individual in absolutist terms as 'pro-Roman' or 'anti-Roman', Swain can happily separate public (Roman) careers from private (Greek) feelings, and identify the degree of warmth that individuals experienced towards their political masters.

The problem with this strategy is that literary texts are not themselves necessarily univocal. Literature can be sophisticated, ludic, self-ironizing, and/or irresponsible: it can provoke and tease its readership with ambivalences, contradictions, and gaps. To identify an author's views on Rome from a text risks an arbitrary foreclosure of meaning. In Kennedy's words, '[t]he degree to which a voice is heard as conflicting or supportive is a function of the audience's—or critic's—ideology, a function, therefore, of *reception*'.<sup>11</sup> The very fact that critics disagree about the degree to which 'Greekness' can be isolated as an identity discrete from (and occasionally opposed to) 'Romanness' shows the extent of the problem: we cannot 'know' how a 'Greek' 'felt' about 'Rome' without engaging in an interpretative exercise that occludes the violence of its own imposition. How can we identify the author's 'true' feelings? What does it mean to emphasize one area of communication as more intense, meaningful, or sincere than another? Indeed, it is precisely when an author insists that he or she is being

escape the political subordination of the present by recalling the past glories of a free Greece (1974; cf. 1982); Swain (1996) maps out statements of both acquiescence and dissent.

<sup>9</sup> Swain (1996), 70.

<sup>10</sup> Swain (1996), 412; cf. 71.

<sup>11</sup> D. F. Kennedy (1992), 41.

sincere (as in the case, for example, of *encomia*), that the knowing reader tends to be the most suspicious . . .

But this is to move too quickly: the terms of analysis require substantial refinement. The category of the 'literary' (conceived of as a site of emotional and aesthetic intensity spontaneously and sincerely expressed from the heart of a great writer) began to emerge only in the late eighteenth century.<sup>12</sup> This is not the place for a detailed review of all the many recent 'genealogies' of literature that seek to question this category by exposing its grounding in Romanticism, the consolidation of national identity, the construction of barriers of class and gender, the teaching of literacy and social order amongst the working classes, the negotiation of an emergent middle class, and the institutional politics of academies.<sup>13</sup> Suffice it to say that there is no ancient Greek term that maps precisely onto 'literature', and certainly no equivalence between the cultural and political conditions of the post-industrial West and Roman Greece. 'Literature' alludes to an experience (and tightly ravelled skein of issues) alien to the texts studied in this book. This does not invalidate it as a term (what is Classical scholarship but the knowing traffic of ideas between ancient and modern categories of analysis?), but it does mean that we shall have to be very clear about what precisely we are investigating.

What in particular I take from recent analyses of the concept of literature is its role in the contests for the definition of social superiority. 'Literature' never exists in a denationalized form: it is always (whether implicitly or explicitly) qualified as 'French', 'Yoruba', 'American', and so forth. It is, moreover, inevitably elitist: 'literature' is inherently bound up with issues of cultural 'value' and distinction. Whatever criteria (formalist, aesthetic,

<sup>12</sup> Although etymologically, of course, the term comes from the Latin *litteratura*: see Quint. *Inst. or.* 2.1.4; 2.14.3, where it refers to linguistic training.

<sup>13</sup> For a concise and lucid account of the issues, at least as they relate to English literature, see Eagleton (1983), 17–53. For other excellent accounts, see Doyle (1989), a brief but sophisticated account of the various academic and national debates and the ideologies that underlay them; Court (1992) on the institutional politics of English literature within the academy; Crawford (1992), focusing particularly upon the Scottish context (see also the essays in Crawford ed. 1988, esp. Duncan 1988). See also J. Dubois (1978) on French literature as a social institution (largely synchronic rather than diachronic, but see pp. 37–8); Graff (1987) on the institutional politics of literature in America (see esp. pp. 209–25 on the relative failure of 'American literature'); Lambropoulos (1988), 23–43 for a 'genealogy' of modern Greek literature.

sociocultural) we use to demarcate the limits of the literary, it is always a matter of the definition of a collective group. In Roman Greece, elite Greeks defined their superiority in terms of education; or, rather, in terms of *paideia*, the Greek word that also connotes civilization and culture.<sup>14</sup> They were the *pepaideumenoi*, the 'educated', as opposed to both the *idiōtai* (i.e. the sub-elite) within Greek culture and the *barbaroi* ('barbarians') without.<sup>15</sup>

The precise nature of the ideal 'education' was a subject of ongoing debate. *Paideia* was not a single, doctrinally coherent system, but the locus for a series of competitions and debates concerning the proper way in which life should be lived. One of the primary differences between modern 'literature' and the texts studied in this book lies in the generic multiplicity of the latter: they include philosophy, rhetoric, history, satire, and biography. All of these genres were subject to internal dissensions and rivalries: rhetoricians argued about style, historians and biographers argued about subject-matter, and philosophers were the most argumentative of the lot. In the first three centuries of the Roman principate there were numerous rival philosophies: there were Pythagoreans, Academics, Peripatetics, Epicureans, Stoics, Cynics, and Sceptics (even leaving out religious cults: Judaism, Christianity, Mithraism, and the cults of Isis and the Magna Mater).<sup>16</sup> The second-century satirist Lucian (echoing Socrates' frustration with contemporary philosophers in Plato's *Apology*) writes of his visit to a number of different philosophers that they all sought to persuade him of their own opinions, 'though none of their pronouncements chimed with those of anyone else, rather they were all conflicting and contradictory' (μηδὲν ἄτερος θατέρωσι λέγοντες ἀκόλουθον ἀλλὰ μαχόμενα πάντα καὶ ὑπεναντία, Luc. *Icar.* 5).<sup>17</sup> In addition, philosophers were competing for paideutic primacy with rhetoricians, sophists, and the many occupants of grey areas between the various manifestations of philosophy and

<sup>14</sup> See esp. Reardon (1971), 3–11; Bowie (1974); G. Anderson (1993), 8–11; Gleason (1995), xxi–xxiv; Swain (1996), 18–64; Schmitz (1997), *passim*, esp. 39–66; Whitmarsh (1998a). On education as social practice, see Kaster (1988); T. Morgan (1998).

<sup>15</sup> See Ch. 2, 'Paideia and Social Status' on the strategies of social exclusion operated by *paideia*.

<sup>16</sup> On the philosophical schools, see André (1987); Whittaker (1987).

<sup>17</sup> For this theme, see also *Men.* 4; *Symp.*, *passim*. For the Platonic model, see *Apol.* 20b–d. On Lucian's representation of philosophers, see Alexiou (1990) and below, Ch. 5.

sophistry (sometimes referred to as *Halbphilosophen*).<sup>18</sup> Though this book focuses on intellectual practice, it should moreover be borne in mind that music and athletics were also constitutive of *paideia*.<sup>19</sup> In the highly competitive world of elite ambition (or *philotimia*),<sup>20</sup> differences between factions in paideutic methods and ideals mapped out the struggles within the elite for prestige and status.<sup>21</sup>

Across the multiplicity of forms and modes of Roman Greek education, one feature remained common: the attempt to root all forms of status and identity in the prestigious past.<sup>22</sup> Although all cultures at all times evoke a sense of the past, the extraordinary nature of this specific phenomenon should not be underestimated. In the period under study, to be 'educated' generally meant to be able to write and declaim fluently in a form of Greek that had passed from popular currency some five centuries earlier. 'Attic' Greek, the dialect written by the canonical authors (primarily Thucydides, Plato, Xenophon, Demosthenes) in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, may have been barely intelligible (and was certainly bizarre) to most contemporary demotic speakers.<sup>23</sup> The satirist Lucian mocks the linguistic excesses of a certain Lexiphanes ('word-flaunter'):

Can't you hear how he talks? Abandoning us, who converse with him now, he talks to us from a thousand years ago, twisting his tongue, combining these alien elements (*allokota*), and taking himself very seriously in the matter, as if it were a great thing for him to speak a foreign language (*xenizoi*) and debase the established currency of speech.

<sup>18</sup> Von Arnim (1898), 4–114; Stanton (1973); Hahn (1989), 46–53; G. Anderson (1993), 133–43; Schmitz (1997), 86. On the exterior semiotic distinctions between philosophers and rhetoricians, see Hahn (1989), 33–6; Schmitz (1997), 86. On the topos of 'conversion' from one discipline to the other, see G. Anderson (1993), 134, and esp. the interesting discussion of Sidebottom (1990), 1–31.

<sup>19</sup> See esp. van Nijf (1999) and König (2000) on athletics and Graeco-Roman identity.

<sup>20</sup> Brown (1978), 27–53. On the endemic competitiveness of the Greek world in this period, see also Gleason (1995), xxiii, 9; and esp. Schmitz (1997), 97–135.

<sup>21</sup> Although Epictetus was from a less privileged, indeed servile background, this fact was itself no doubt primarily a sign of 'authenticity' within elite culture: certainly, Epictetus' students (such as Arrian) seem to have been dignitaries. Against the overstated case for lower-class rhetoricians, see Bowie (1982), 54–5.

<sup>22</sup> On uses of the past, see esp. Bowie (1974); Swain (1996), 65–100.

<sup>23</sup> On the technical aspects of Atticism (and its difference from Greek koine), see Swain (1996), 27–33, Schmitz (1997), 67–83, and esp. Horrocks (1997), 78–86.



οὐκ ἀκούεις οἷα φθέγγεται; καὶ ἡμᾶς τοὺς νῦν προσομιλοῦντας καταλιπὼν πρὸ χιλίων ἐτῶν ἡμῖν διαλέγεται διαστρέφων τὴν γλώτταν καὶ ταυτὶ τὰ ἀλλόκοτα συντιθεὶς καὶ σπουδὴν ποιούμενος ἐπ' αὐτοῖς, ὥς δὴ τι μέγα ὄν, εἴ τι ξενίζει καὶ τὸ καθεστηκὸς νόμισμα τῆς φωνῆς παρακόπτοι. (Lex. 20)

The speaker under attack here is representing as 'speaking a foreign language' (*xenizein*) in relation to the norms of speech, as though the Attic dialect were a different language altogether. The great irony here is that the dialect used by Lucian here is itself conspicuously Attic.<sup>24</sup> Although what he teases is Lexiphanes' *excess*, his own writing is similarly archaic, 'foreign', and complicit in the very process that he mocks (a characteristically Lucianic self-ironization).<sup>25</sup> The difference between Lucian's Atticism and that of Lexiphanes is one of degree, but such relative judgements only serve to expose the arbitrariness of any fixed point of division between the acceptable and the ludicrous.

The primary focus of this book is upon the role of *paideia* in defining the 'cultural' category, 'Greekness' (or, to use a more properly Greek term, 'Hellenism'). Since the fifth century BCE, education had played a centrally constitutive role in defining what it is to be Greek. Thucydides presents Pericles as publicly praising Athens as an 'education (*paideusis*) for Greece' (τῆς Ἑλλάδος παιδευσιν, Thuc. 2.41.1).<sup>26</sup> In the context of this stage of Greek history, in which various Greek city-states were vying for supremacy, Pericles' words here represent an attempt to render the democratic civic ideology of Athens paradigmatic of Greek identity as a whole. Pericles aims to achieve this, significantly, through the language of education (*paideusis*, cognate with *paideia*). Athenianism is (to be conceived of as) exactly commensurate with Hellenism.<sup>27</sup> Athens's self-representation as a cultural

<sup>24</sup> In this passage, he uses the double tau (γλώτταν: on this distinctively Attic formation see *Iud. uoc.* 7, with Swain 1996: 48–9), the 'deictic' iota (ταυτὶ), and the optative (ξενίζει, παρακόπτοι).

<sup>25</sup> Below, pp. 263–4; 278; 292.

<sup>26</sup> Thucydides does not, however, silence the alternative, and less flattering, descriptions of Athenian hegemony as a 'tyranny' or an 'enslavement': see e.g. Thuc. 2.8.4; 2.63.2 (where Pericles himself describes the empire as a 'tyranny'); see further de Ste Croix (1954–5). The role of Athens as educator of Greece is clearly expressed in other funeral speeches: see Lys. 2.69; Dem. 60.16; Hyp. 6.8; Ober (1989), 157. Athens was also the context in which literate, musical, and athletic education first took on the form that would later become canonical: see Marrou (1956), 36–78; T. Morgan (1999).

<sup>27</sup> On the uneasy relationship between Panhellenism and Athenian ideology, see E. Hall (1989), 16–17.