# From Homer to Hulu : The Power of Storytelling in International Relations



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# Abstract

Storytelling has long been a source of knowledge in society, from antiquity to the modern day. This project seeks to clearly outline the power that storytelling holds in International Relations based on prevailing theories, including classical realism, structuralism, and constructivism, as well as situate storytelling as a valid source of knowledge production in IR. By examining stories from Greek antiquity, early European modernity, and the present day, the project attempts to show that stories' ability to address reality thematically as opposed to scientifically allows it to exert power on the international scene through normative, transformative and categorial means. This thematic approach, prominent in antiquity, becomes prominent again in a post-truth society.

# I. Introduction

It is no exaggeration to say that Homer's *Iliad* served as the foundational oral tradition, and later written document, for the Hellenic Mediterreanean. As with the Hebrew Bible in the Levant, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* served as part historical record, part religious manual for the Greeks of the Peloponnesus and Asia Minor. Illustrating the profound effect of Homer's characters, when Athenian philosophy flourished five hundred years after Homer, philosophers still pointed to Odysseus as the moral exemplar for the modern Athenian.[1] Perhaps even more practically, the *Iliad* cemented an early sense of Panhellenism that dictated early poleis-relations in Ancient Greece.[2] For the Hellenes of the 5th century BC, stories carried weight and power that manifested on nearly every level of daily life.

Herodotus' *Histories* represented a major paradigm shift in Greek historical tradition. Centered on the Greco-Persian War, *Histories* is often considered the first history undertaken as a professional endeavor while attempting to maintain standards of observation.[3] While Homer's story is derived from the Muses within the text, and from previous oral traditions outside of it,

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[1] Silvia Montiglio, "From Villain to Hero: Odysseus in Ancient Thought," in *From Villain to Hero: Odysseus in Ancient Thought* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011), 66

[2] Shawn A. Ross. "Barbarophonos: Language and Panhellenism in the Iliad." *Classical Philology* 100, no. 4 (2005): 299-316. 300

[3] James T. Luce, *The Greek Historians* (London: Routledge, 2003), 26.

Herodotus relays *Histories* via reported speech, or claims of first-hand knowledge. Whereas consumers of the Odyssey and *Iliad* would have understood the events as being poetic in nature, readers of Herodotus' *Histories* would have been expected to interpret it as fact, at least as Herodotus thought of them. Yet this is problematic, as *Histories* includes a number of fantastic stories that even Herodotus' contemporaries scoffed at, such as the infamous gold digging ants in the Persian courts. Yet even today the document serves as a major foundation for our understanding of the period, in the historical and cultural sense. How can one view Herodotus as a valuable source of information when the veracity of his writing is called into question?

What makes these two pieces, along with their contemporary works, interesting as forms of knowledge production is their relationship to "truth" or "knowledge" over "fact". Even by Herodotus' time, educated Greeks would have known, and understood, that the *Iliad* and other myths were just that - myths.[4] And yet at the same time, they were unbothered by utilizing such myths as the foundational sources of ethical, moral and even at times political decision making.[5] Herodotus' historian successor Thucydides heavily criticized his predecessor for promoting events that could not have happened, or happened as Herodotus described them, yet still based his own work on its frame. Thucydides, among others, still turned to Herodotus' *Histories* for its purely didactic elements, regardless of how divorced they were from factual events.[6] However, the main point of the stories of Greek antiquity is not that events happened but rather encapsulate ethical philosophy on action and consequence. In other words, it is not important whether or not Antigone and Creon existed, but rather that the conflict between them represents human-centered

[4] Paul Veyne, "Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths?: an Essay on the Constitutive Imagination," in *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths?: an Essay on the Constitutive Imagination* (Chicago u.a.: Univ. of Chicago Pr., 2009), 1

[5] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 121

[6] Christopher Welser. "Two Didactic Strategies at the End of Herodotus' Histories (9.108–122)." *Classical Antiquity* 28(2) (2009): 359-85.

lessons that ancient Greeks would have believed true.[7] This didactic power ties Greek politics and Greek literature together.

The didactic element of storytelling, be it in the oral or written tradition, transcends decision making based on empirical facts, in order to reveal the truths about choices and outcomes and establish meaningful frameworks for interpersonal relationships on a large and small scale. This didactic power of storytelling allows it to fulfill ethical, moral, philosophical and political roles without the need for scientific veritability. Didactic stories can be non-fictional, purely fictional, or even allegorical in construction, with some pieces blurring the lines between genres. Yet regardless of the literary genre, narratives and stories not only fulfill an important role in truth production but also exert a level of power on political activity.

Of course, antiquity is not modernity. Stories of old do not factor into the decision making of national leaders in the way that the *Iliad* governed the normative frameworks of inter-poleis conflict in post-Dark Age Greece. Today, diplomacy and international relations are considered through a complex filter of government bureaucracies and massive think tanks. America's foreign policy looks not towards Odysseus but to RAND for guidance. In the field of IR scholarship, there had long been a similar shift away from literature as a source for knowledge in IR, with the field inching closer towards the political and social sciences and the rise of positivist methodology. For some time, any delve into IR on the scholarly level would be through scientific means.

Yet to say that stories have no bearing at all on modern international politics is to be overly dismissive and restrictive. Relations between countries and their people are influenced as much by their cultural products, media included, as by the global actions undertaken by

[7] Adriana Broo . "Suppliant and Savior, Student and Teacher: The Didactic Motif in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*." *Classical World* 113(1) (2019): 29-51

sovereigns. Vladimir Putin famously commented, however tongue in cheek, that the television program *House of Cards* provided outsiders an accurate representation of U.S. politics.[8] Furthermore, the narrative and aesthetic turn has seen international relations examined through all forms of media and points of view, shifting away from scholarly works and into "the real world." But what makes these literary, non-scholarly sources useful and valid for IR? The answer may lay in one of the most central concepts to the study of international relations: power.

## II. Research Puzzle

What power do stories have in the study of international relations and politics, despite IR being based on what is considered the empirical "real"?

Drawing from the comparative literature approaches to history, the thesis will attempt to examine international relations with the literary lens, particularly through stories. The project hypothesizes that storytelling, especially that found in Greek antiquity, has both a unique didactic power, with the ability to affect tangible change in decision making, as well as provides a tool for examining power structures within the international arena itself. Traditionally, stories have been studied in the realm of international politics as being representative of power, providing useful portraits. The central argument of this paper is that stories act as agents or instruments, exerting a level of power or force upon the machinery of international politics. This power bypasses the normal reliance on empirical fact in international political study, utilizing storytelling and fiction's unique ability to create and reform scenarios rather than simply record and replay.

[8] Reid Standish, "Perspective, 'House of Cards' Is Credible. Just Ask the Russians, Chinese and Iranians.," The Washington Post (WP Company, October 26, 2018), https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/house-of-cards-is-credible-just-ask-the-russians-chinese-and-iranians/2018/10/25/81b02346-d644-11e8-aeb7-ddcad4a0a54e_story.html.

While stories, fiction and narrative have been studied in detail via the narrative or aesthetic turns, such pieces usually focus on a small number of fictional works and apply them to IR as a whole. This project seeks to collect and identify the common power that stories have that apply to all fiction and all IR, borrowing from previous scholars who have written on both the concept of power in IR and the role of aesthetics within it.

First, there will be a brief exploration of literature's role in truth production and fiction's relationship with "the real", especially in the realm of politics and international relations. How does fiction interact with the real world and in what ways can it be considered as real as what we experience first hand? By acknowledging fiction and stories as a form of not only knowledge but as truth, it allows literature to have its own power in the real world, as opposed to simply used as an academic lens to examine other phenomena.

This paper will then examine the concept of power within international relations and international politics. What is power to the sovereign, to the nation, and to the author? How does that power manifest within and through stories? The project will offer an examination of previous studies of power and power in stories from antiquity to the present in an attempt to create an operable list of commonalities.

It will then proceed to offer case studies of storytelling's relationship with power over three periods in European history: Greek antiquity, early modernity, and the present day.

For the purposes of this thesis, it is also necessary to define a number of key terms within it, what is a story. Stories do not include only fiction, although many of the works used in the case studies would be considered fictional by today's standards. However, it is not suitable to refer to only what we consider narratives. For instance, the field of IR has experienced a renewed interest in narrative forms, including the seminal IR narrative work *Politics of Exile* by Elizabeth

Dauphinee. However, such projects are perhaps more closely related to journalism or ethnographies than what one might traditionally think of as a "story". Therefore this thesis will focus primarily on works that are fictional either in intent or interpretation.



## III. Stories and Truth Production

What qualifies fiction to comment on reality? Even more specifically, what qualifies fiction to comment on international politics? Milan Babik characterizes academic scholarship in international relations as being jealous of its empirical status, and the source of "true knowledge about world politics."[9] In doing so, Babik warns, it creates an atmosphere of suspicion towards IR sources outside of the traditional academic canon. This is particularly true of stories, or about any other artform rooted outside of the scientific realm. However, some scholars have challenged this rigidity either directly or indirectly. Hayden White in particular stands out as championing the story as a tool to not only analyze but represent reality. For White, narrative and stories bridge the gap "between knowing and telling."[10] History and the realm of the real seldom can easily and neatly be interpreted. Narrative offers history the chance to "have real events display the coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure of an image of life that is and can only be imaginary."[11] White's theory of narrative not only then helps validate storytelling as a mode of truth production, but makes storytelling vital to the production of knowledge. History, existing as facts, cannot be made useful with the structure of narrative.[12] The narrative itself is what gives

[9] Milan Babik. *The Poetics of International Politics: Fact and Fiction in Narrative Representations of World Affairs.* (London: Routledge, 2018), 4
[10] Hayden White. "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality." Critical Inquiry 7, no. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). 27
[11] Ibid
[12] Ibid, 5

historical facts meaning and therefore usability. White also addresses the interplay between reality and narrative. Instead of being objectively based, history is as subjective as any story and the reader or scholar can and will interpret it based on their narrative.[13] What then emerges from stories is a lens that can fundamentally alter our perception of truth or reality.

Other scholars have also addressed narrative or discourse relationships to truth production and reality. Foucault's characterization of "facts" also allows space for literature to trespass from fiction into the real. For Foucault, facts merely become so as a result of societal forces or agreement.[14] Furthermore, truth for Foucault is not a constant across societies but is rather formed from an agreed upon discourse established by a society, or societies, itself.[15] If one considers stories to be a part of a society's discourse, then they would play a role in determining that truth. Finally, Foucault treats fiction as not only a valid source of truth, but a method to create it. For Foucault, to "fiction" is to bring something into existence.[16] By utilizing fiction to explore the political, writers are able to create discourse that is no less valid, or true, than the discourse stemming from the historical. Indeed, Foucault claims that histories are in themselves fictions, created from political realities.[17] This statement closely reflects White's own view on narrative, implying that reality requires structure before becoming knowledge.

Allowing these arguments, what results then is a fluid, and more adaptable way to look at the realm of international politics, especially when examining the discursive elements that affect international governance. But if stories qualify as valid tools, what exactly do those tools help

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[13] Ibid, 7-8
[14] Hayden V. White "Foucault Decoded: Notes from Underground" . *History and Theory* 12(1), 23-54. 30
[15] Michel Foucault. "Truth and Power : An Interview with Michel Foucault." *Critique of Anthropology* 4(13) (1979): 131
[16]Michel Foucault, Gordon, C. *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings*, 1972-1977. (New York: Pantheon Books), 193
[17] Ibid

scholars reveal? The premise of this argument is that stories can act as an agent with power in international politics, as well as useful lenses for interpreting international political realities.

## IV. The Concept Power in Relation to Storytelling and Fiction

What exactly is power in international politics? Milan Babik laments that in IR scholarship, the definition of power is too often "merely implied and left up to one's imagination, hardly ever explicitly defined."[18] To some extent, this is true, as definitions of what power *is* are lacking. However, it is often defined instrumentally or functionally, answering instead how power is exerted and what power does respectively. Even in this vein, different theorists have conceptualized power's outcome in dramatically different ways.

The realist mode of thought places a heavy focus on the ability of sovereign states to guard and pursue its own self-interest. Based on the anacharcal state of nature and irredeemable qualities of man, power in realist thought serves to achieve the self-interest driven goals of nations, with power itself often characterized as a physical force. The tenets of classical realism have their roots in political theory stretching from antiquity to the 19th century. Classical political realists point specifically to pieces such as Thucydides' *Melian Dialogue* to support their concept of power. In the *Dialogue*, Athens claims that "the strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must."[19] Weber's definition aligns strongly with this realist approach, stating that macht, or power, is simply exerting one's will over others.[20] Hans Morgenthau would transpose this political theory into the international in his work *Politics Among Nations*, arguing that international relations were governed by the same laws as basic human behavior.[21] For

[18] Babik, 2
[19] Thucydides, 5.84
[20] Max Weber, *The Theory Of Social And Economic Organization.* (Simon and Shuester, 2009)
[21] Hans Morganthau, *Politics Among Nations* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1949). 4

scholars such as Morgenthau, and his realist contemporaries such as Kennan and Niebuhr, nations, like men, primarily sought self-preservation and the power to achieve it; there would be no room for actions outside this paradigm. However, to say that such power is purely physical is an overgeneralization. In classical realism, power is not as strictly defined as the goals of power. Morgenthau allowed for ideational power as much as physical. Michael C. Williams offers a much more nuanced assessment of Morgenthau, saying that he "[attempts] to recognize the centrality of power [...] while avoiding the extreme conclusion that politics is nothing but violence."[22] Morgenthau himself would refute the idea that classical realism pertains only to material power. Instead, power and interest have fluid definitions. Morgenthau "stressed more than before it's immaterial aspects, especially in the form of charismatic power, and [...] the discussion of political ideologies."[23] Such statements maintain an air of constructivsm, with its importances on ideas, meanings, and identities. Even so, realism can not escape its focus on the supposed inherent anarchy of international space, as well the natural state of competition between sovereign states.

The classical realist approach would remain dominant for the early parts of the 20th century, with neorealism taking up the torch in the 1970s. As the name implies, neorealism is a direct offshoot of realism and while it does not broadly expand the actors or wielders of power, it does expand what the instruments of power. Centered on the scholarship of Kenneth Waltz, neorealism still retains war and conflict as the central state of relations between nations, the so-called state of nature.[24] However, though states naturally aim to avoid war and preserve their own existence, Waltz notes that relations between nations are not purely competive or

[22]Michael C Williams. "Why Ideas Matter in International Relations: Hans Morgenthau, Classical Realism, and the Moral Construction of Power Politics." *International Organization* 58(4) (2004): 633-65. 634
[23] Morgenthau in Williams 640
[24] Kenneth Waltz. *Theory of International Politics* ( Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1979). 102

antagonistic but can reach levels of interdependence, thus changing how power is wielded in the international system.[25] Power is then characterized as hierarchical and competitive at the same time. Though more complex and structured than its predecessor, neorealism is still grounded in power as a tool for national self-interest. In some ways, despite its broadening of the definition of power, neorealism restricts more than it opens by attempting to situate realism in the realm of the scientific, anchoring the language of international relations in fields such as economics.

Realism, and to some extent neorealism, would eventually yield intellectual hegemony, if unwillingly, to several other conceptualizations. This shift was partially in response to realism's heavy focus on hard power, embodied most often by military might, and the nation as its primary agent. As concepts of power expanded, so too did its primary agents and ultimate goal. Two in particular conceptions are of particular interest to this argument: the structuralist/post structuralist and constructivist.

The constructivist interprets the world as being socially constructed. Power then helps develop these social constructions. Constructivism then inherently expands the actor in international relations and therefore the wielders of power, as opposed to the nation-centric view of realism. Wendt's "Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics" outlines the basic tenets of constructivism, which in many ways directly contradict those of realism. The most basic principle outlined is that actors act not on fundamental laws of nature, as stated in realism, but based on socially constructed meanings.[26] Furthermore, these meanings are not exclusively internally generated but rather through interaction between actors.[27] If behaviors between states are based on intersubjective meanings, then power manifests through

[25] Waltz, 105
[26] Alexander Wendt. "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics." *International Organization* 46(2) (1992): 391-425. 396-7
[27] Ibid, 403

the ability to establish or change these meanings. In some ways, constructivism implies that the definition of power itself is subject to the intersubjective forces of constructivism in the world as a whole. In Lebow's "Thucydides the Constructivist ", the way in which power is not only perceived but also wielded changes over the course of the Peloponessian War. According to Lebow, Thucydides depicts the language and exertion of power as shifting from *hegemonia*, or leadership through diplomacy and consent, to *arkhe* or dominion through force and coercion.[28] Thus power, like reality in constructivism, is affected by ideas constructed by their societies.

Poststructuralist concepts of power are far less uniform than that of the realist or neorealist schools. However, some scholars have attempted to address the question of power head-on. Hannah Arendt, for instance, positions power as opposite to violence, in direct contradiciton to the classical realist.[2930] Instead, power stems from support, not antagonism, and is communal or collective in nature. Violence and material force for Arendt are goals, separate from power which is an attribute.[31] Arendt characterizes it then as, " the human ability not just to act but to act in concert."[32] This collectivity or concert is embodied by Arendt's concept of politics. In Arendt's politicla arena, power is confused with force as power is wielded in politics which in turn is dominated by force. Arendt also implies in her discussion of Homer that discourses have power independent or often in conjunction with action.[33] According to Arendt, the Hellenes of the Homeric world and the successor poleis considered discourse to be action in and of themselves, with the power to address challenges that physical action could not.[34] If for Arendt, discourse has power, it must also ask: the power to do what? In *Politics*, she implies that

[28] Richard Ned Lebow. "Thucydides the Constructivist." *The American Political Science Review* 95(3) (2001): 547-60
[29] Hannah Arendt. *On Violence* (Orlando: Harcourt 1970). 37
[30] Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics* (New York: Schocken, 2009). 142
[31] Arendt, *On Violence* 41
[32] Ibid, 44
[33] Arendt, *Promise of Politics* 125
[34] Ibid

there is a certain historical quality to discourse, in that they preserve ideals within the polis. It could also be interpreted that discourse is a form of ongoing identity, which creates a sense of cohesion, and allows for political cooperation and therefore power.

Foucault's concepts of power are similarly focused on the power of discourse, in particular through discourse. For Foucault, power, knowledge and truth are intertwined. Especially in the realm of the scientific, knowledge determines truth, which in and of itself is a form of discursive power.[35] Like constructivists, Foucault's power is then based on intersubjective grounds, to be determined by actors or groups of actors in a society. Foucault goes even further, however, by characterizing discourse as the primary realm of ideas and thinking, where truth is constructed. These discourses are "repeated indefinitely", and remain in society establishing norms and truths.[36]

How then does storytelling align with these modes of power, if at all? One thing that is clear is that stories are not inherently realist, structural, or constructivist in nature but rather, as a power tool can be interpreted through any such frameworks. The question remains how. To answer this question, it is helpful to begin by simply asking what changes can stories affect on the world of international relations and politics.

Several authors, from antiquity to the present, have weighed in on the role and power of storytelling, with a number of vastly different conclusions. In Plato's *Republic*, storytelling's power is fully acknowledged as a source of moral education, yet Plato himself casstigates storytelling as purposely misleading, and a danger to the ideal society.[37] In this hypothetical society, poets would be banned not because stories have no place, but because their power can be abused. Plato's contradictory feelings aside, it is clear that Plato feels that the arts have a place

[35] Foucault, Truth and Power 131
[36] Michel Focault. "Orders of Discourse." Social Science Information 10(2) (1971): 7–30. 57
[37] Plato, *Republic* III.326

within the education of the political elite. Aristotle would examine storytelling indirectly in *Rhetoric* and directly in *Poetics* as being in some way being reflections of reality. Babik's own work characterizes poetics as having its own definitive power "to induce audiences, through the use of poetic techniques and narrative strategies commonly associated with fiction writing, to adopt a certain consciousness of political reality…"[38] From this perspective, storytelling in the form of narrative and fiction is primarily persuasive in nature, creating conscious changes in the reader's own position. One could argue that this position is heavily constructivist in nature, in that the persuasive power of storytelling creates or reinforces ideas in society that determine how actors derive meanings for interaction.

Arendt explicitly addresses archetypal storyteller Homer in *Promise of Politics*, and offers valuable insight into the function and importance of stories to power. First, stories help bind communities into cohesive entities, offering a common identity. This was especially true of Homer, whose poetry immortalizes the Greek heroes in a way that assures their inclusion in discourse forever. This function would, according to Arendt's quote of Pericles, only be subsumed by the polis, the archtpyical political entity.[39]

Because power rarely has consistent definitions even across various schools of thought in international relations, the concept is often viewed in its abilities or effects on the world. Like a blackhole in nature, power in international political theory cannot be pointed to, but instead makes its visible through the world around it. What then does storytelling have the ability to do and how does it fit in existing frameworks? Based on literature's function and production throughout history, storytelling can be interpreted as having three main abilities.

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[38] Babik, 3

[39] Dirk de Schutter "Literature as Resistance: Hannah Arendt on Storytelling" In Gaye W.O., Joseph C.A.B. (eds) *Theology and Literature*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2006). 218

It first leverages a level of power upon the histories that international relations relies on. Particularly, storytelling has a transformative quality to it that allows it to shape how events in the international arena are remembered and therefore acted upon. This is a consequence of how fiction is consumed and how truth is formulated on a societal level. The transformative power of storytelling exists in several ways. In the modern era, it is most associated with intentional propaganda efforts. However, literature has also been used as a genuine historical source, both by then-contemporary scholars, as well as present day historians. An excellent example of how storytelling drastically changes how we interpret past events is Julius Caesar's *Gaulic Wars*, a highly suspect narrative which we nonetheless rely on as a historical source.[40] Stories, especially in the form of historical literature, has and continues to be widely available. This availability allows a particular discourse to become dominant among its consumers, regardless of its basis in empirical, historical fact.

Storytelling also has normative power, especially in the period of antiquity when the line between history and literature was heavily blurred. Whether the ancient Hellenes believed Achilles was a demigod is generally irrelevant to the Iliad's didactic quality. However, the examples of not only heroic arete but the norms of combat and diplomacy persisted into
This power does not suggest that storytelling *develops* norms, however, but instead offers an alternative repository for them. Norms, whether on the individual, societal, or international level can be transferred through repeated action. However, norms can also be found in reference texts. These texts may be scholarly in nature, through manuals or philosophical treatise. However, stage play, novels, and oral myth are equally important repositories of normative conventions. This normative power is closely related to Foucault's own theory of repressive versus normative

[40] Emilio Gabba. "True History and False History in Classical Antiquity." *The Journal of Roman Studies* 71 (1981): 50-62. 51

power. Unlike the power of the state, literature lacks the ability to directly enforce its will upon the reader. Instead, stories reinforce the normative expectations of ideal scenarios, especially through the literary devices of action and consequence.

Storytelling also has power based on identity with the ability to create or maintain collective communities and identities. We might also call this categorical power. Hannah Arendt's theory of power is closely related to this form. Literature has the power to both develop homogeneous communities as well as establish differences between outside communities. By establishing these community boundaries of insider versus outsiders, literature is able to contribute to the collective form of power proposed by Arendt. This is reflected in phrases such as "the Great American Novel", which insinuate that certain pieces of literature reflect common experiences that apply across a nation. These identities can also reinforce insider/outsider, or even friend/enemy distinctions that can color how readers see those beyond their borders. One need not look further than the propagandistic and jingoistic Cold War novels of the 1950s and 60s.

Outside of its own inherent power, storytelling gives the author the ability to examine power structures within the "real world" through either historical reenactment, as one might see in Shakespeare's *Henry V*, or historical analogue, as seen in fictional worlds. Storytelling then becomes a tool for inquiry as much as a source to be examined. As explored in the truth production section, stories can be interpreted and utilized as representations of the real, in the vein of Aristotle's mimesis. In truth, this is not a power of literature but rather a use for it.

Together, these elements make for a foundational source in international relations that can often be overlooked in favor of the more narrow scholarly corpus. However, these elements of power are especially accessible because they are not unique to particular works but rather can be

found in common across a number of literary traditions. Power is a central concept to IR, both in modernity and antiquity and storytelling's centrality is intrinsically tied to that of power. It is not that storytelling is an inherently constructivist, structuralist or realist concept in IR. Rather, the above categories represent observable methods of power, all of which can be inserted and interpreted in existing power frameworks in international relations.



## V. Cases in Antiquity: The Iliad, Greek Tragedy and Early Histories

Because of its foundation status in Western thought, this project first examines Greek literature and fiction. Fiction is something of an anachronism when referring to Greek literature, as it would not have been the term used. To some extent, the boundaries between fiction and history were blurred, especially in Classical and Homeric era Greece.[41] Instead, Greek works of literature, drama, and poetry were often treated as mimetic reflections of reality, as in Aristotle's *poesis* and *mimesis*. What results is a focus on human action and consequence with a unique transhistoric appeal.

The Iliad is among the more well-explored pieces of Greek literature both in a historical perspective and for the frameworks it offers today. However, its status as a historical or political source is somewhat controversial because of how little we understand the Homeric period. One must also fight the temptation to treat the international relations of the *Iliad* as direct predecessors to that of inter-citystate politics. At its core, the *Iliad* is still a piece of literature before the didactic manual. Despite the popular legend that Alexander the Great slept with

[41] Victoria Wohl. *Probabilities, Hypotheticals, and Counterfactuals in Ancient Greek Thought*, edited by Victoria Wohl, iii-iii. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014)

Homer's most famous works under his pillow, the epic would have provided very little relevance on carrying out the then-modern war. Yet even so, it still clearly not only touches upon some of the international political theory themes illustrated in Brown, but clearly demonstrates the three forms of literary power described above.

First, the *Iliad* demonstrates the power of creating identities not only in its own time but well past its authoring. The clearest way it does this is by establishing clear insider/outsider paradigms for Greek society. While historians are not entirely certain of the ethnic dynamics between the inhabitants of the pre-classical Aegean, the language used in the *Iliad* clearly differentiates which Greeks are considered *insiders*, or part of the Hellenic community, setting them aside from the Trojans. The use of the terms Achaeans is particularly meaningful, rather than the use of the term "Greek" or "Hellene". The Achaeans were one of several tribes that constituted the peoples of classical Greece. Like other tribes, they were eventually displaced during the Dorian invasions. These ethnic or civic markers would still come into play during the Dark Ages and beyond, establishing certain expectations in inter-poleis relations. Herodotus tells of the Spartan King Cleomenes I, coming to the aid of his Athenian ally and friend Isagoras.[42] During his campaign, Cleomenes attempts to enter the temple of Athena; he is told that it is against the law for Dorians to enter the temple. Cleomenes proclaims in return that he is an Achaen. It is unlikely that Cleomenes is denying his own Spartan heritage, as the Lacodemonians were themselves Dorian. However, this encounter may be interpreted as *all* Greeks being Achaeans because Homer labels all of the Greeks who fought the Trojans as "Achaeans." Further examples of panhellenic identity stemming from Greek stories are abundant

[42] Herodotus, Histories 9.25.1

and varied. Depictions of Greek dieties in tragedies, for instance, serve to reinforce the panhellenic nature of the Olympian Pantheon, the Iliad among them.[43]

Furthermore, the *Iliad* provides a set of norms and expectations for both the statesmen and relations between states.[44] It demonstrates these norms both through positive and negative examples. When Agamemnon denies Chryseis' ransom, Apollo punishes . Furthermore, when Achilles initially refuses to bury Hector's body, it is cast as almost anathema, a result of Achilles' unnatural rage.[45] This rage, which has alienated the hero from Achaean society, is cast as something that must be overcome in order for Achilles to return to the normative restrictions of heroic Greek society. These themes would be carried into the Classical era. When Aristotle speaks of *politikon zoon* and life within the polis, he is referring to the highly regimented life structured around civic norms. Achilles' withdrawal from Achaean society because of his rage is more than a setback for the Greek camp. Rather, it is a didactic scenario in which the reader is warned about the dangers of withdrawing from the defined norms of monaarchal society. The consequences are clear: the Greeks are forced to fight on the beachheads, nearly losing their ships in the process, and Patroclus is slain in a desperate attempt to turn the tides. When Achilles' rage finally subsides, it is not through violence but rather diplomacy, as King Priam visits Achilles to plead for Hector's body. As far as the *Iliad* is concerned, Achilles' resolution comes through aligning oneself within social norms.

The *Iliad* would not be the only source of fictional text to have didactic elements. Greek drama continued the tradition of didactic storytelling. The entirety of Greek drama is structurally and mechanically based on the ethical dilemma, or *agon* (greek). However, other tragedies and

[43] Andre Lardinois. *Greek Myths for Athenian Rituals: Religion and Politics in Aeschylus' Eumenides and Sophocles' Oedipus Coloneus*, (Princeton: Princeton University, 1993). 343
[44] Chris Brown, Terry Nardin, and Nicholas Rengger, eds. *International Relations in Political Thought: Texts from the Ancient Greeks to the First World War*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). 21
[45] James A. Arieti "Achilles' Alienation in "Iliad 9"." *The Classical Journal* 82(2) (1986): 1-27. 3

dramas have incorporated events outside of the polis to offer dilemmas, consequences and norms beyond the society limits. The oral tradition of Homer would make way for stage tradition of the likes of Sophocles and Aristophanes. These dramas and comedies represent a mix of both mythical and historical, yet their storytelling elements still demonstrate types of didactic power that are relevant to international politics.

While the play itself does not survive, Phrynichus's *Capture of Miletus* helps demonstrate of the best examples of storytelling's power, particularly transformative and categorical power, in international relations. The Ionian Revolt in the 490s BC ultimately led to the sacking of the rebellion's capital of Miletus in Asia Minor. Being a colony of Athens, news of Miletus' sacking would be have trasmitted across Attica. However, Herodotus offers a much clearer portrait of Athens' reactions a year later with Phrynicus' play. Herodotus claims that Phrynicus was fined for reminding them of the tragic failure of the revolt.[46] Herodotus himself has little more to say about the play, and the play itself has not survived but historical context may provide a clue as to just what power the play exerted over Athenian foreign policy. Themistocles, then-archon of Athens, had prior the sack of Miletus failed to win popular Athenian support for the Ionian rebellion.[47] Themistocles would later choose the play to be performed in Athens, perhaps as a reminder of Athens' failure to protect their colonial relatives. If Herodotus is to be believed, we may speculate that the events presented on stage through storytelling had more of an impact on the Athenian psyche than the oral accounts relayed by survivors, traders, and travelers. Donald Kagan would note in a lecture that the play contributed to a stark change in Athen's stance towards the Persian Empire, and gave Themistocles the support he needed to combat the Persians. *The Capture of Miletus* then also builds identity as a story. While an Athenian colony,

[46] Herodotus 6.21.2
[47] Attilio Favorini. "History, Collective Memory, and Aeschylus' "The Persians". *Theatre Journal* 55(1) (2003): 99-111. 102

Miletus was left to its own fate during the Ioninan Revolt. Yet through the first-hand, visual experience of Greek drama created a moment of empathy and shared identity with the Miletians, an accomplishment made possible through storytelling.

We can interpret this effect through several lenses of power. On one hand, we may interpret Themistocles' use of play through the realist lens. For an interventionist such as Themistocles, the result of neutrality or passivity in the face of the Persian Empire only empowers the opponent. By using Phrynicus' play to present an anarchic regional order in which sovereign states pursue their own interests, the play exerts an ideological power that ultimately serves Athenian policy interests. From a constructivist point of view, the sacking of Miletus' meaning is changed when it is presented first hand to Athenians by way of drama. A poststructuralist reading would similarly align by changing the international structures of the Hellenic world. Before Miletus, the Hellenic world turned primarily inward, especially in its poetry. Yet *Miletus* and later dramas would turn the Greek gaze beyond its borders to great powers across the Mediterranean.

Aeschylus's *Persians* provides a further excellent example of Greek drama's political power. Like the *Iliad*, *Persians* contains a number of normative themes on politics framed in the mechanics of Greek tragedy. Instead of rage severing Achilles from the political framework of polis, hubris is depicted as being central to the fall of Xerxes and his defeat at Salamis. Darius' ghost is summoned by his wife Atossa, and in a heated dialogue mocks the arrogance and hubris of Xerxes.[48] This rebuke would mirror the imperial hubris of Athens in Peloponessian War. In *Persians*, Darius is established as the foil to his son Xerxes, with the former representing the hegemonic power of Persia, and the latter representing the expansionist tyrant.[49] This dichotomy

[48] Aeschylus, *Persians*, Line 1100
[49] Rebecca Futo Kennedy. "A Tale of Two Kings: Competing Aspects of Power in Aeschylus' Persians." *Ramus* 42(1-2) (2013): 64–88. 66.

the later position of imperial Athens, which begins the Peloponnesian War as a hegemon and leader of a willing coalition yet through its own hubristic lust of power, its hegemony degenerates into arche, or domination.[50]

*Persians* also use the relationship between the two powers to create an identity for Athens. Unlike Herodotus' account of the Persian Wars, which emphasizes the disparity between Greek and Persians forces, further reinforcing the "underdog" image of the conflict, *Persians* can be interpreted as elevating Athens to closer to a peer power, justifying its hegemonic position. By doing so, *Persians* creates or reinforces the Athenian identity as one that can justifiably exclude lesser Greeks in its political decision making.[51]

The power of storytelling in antiquity is not restricted to what would be considered historical or mythical fiction. The works of Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon are also narratively structured, and also apply the power of stories. Despite all three writers nominally being considered "historians", all three include elements in their works that could be interpreted as purely fictional, or at least highly suspect. Yet these inconsistencies and discrepencies do not detract from the discursive power of the historical works. Instead, the narrative freedom allowed by the Greek historians *cum* storytellers allow the authors to address issues out of reach of simple chronological histories.

Herodotus' *Histories* has a particularly strong transformative power, due in part for its narrative structure and storytelling method. First, Herodotus' history would have been far more accessible than Thucydides' to the common Greek, with its many elements reminiscent of the oral tradition.[52] Despite the heavy reliance on Herodotus' works by both contemporary and

[50] Lebow, 550
[51] Kennedy, 66
[52] Mabel L Lang. "Herodotus: Oral History with a Difference." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 128(4) (1984): 93-103.

modern scholars of Greek history, his chronicle is by no means utterly definitive. Even outside of the normal issues surrounding the accurate study of ancient history, even other histories during Herodotus' time conflicted heavily with his accounts. A prime example can be found in accounts of the death of Cyrus the Great. Herodotus claims that Cyrus met his end in a campaign of conquest against the Massagatae and their warrior queen Tomyris. Yet contemporary or near contemporary accounts by both Ctesias and Xenophon drastically differ. Xenophon, for instance, claims that Cyrus died peacefully in his sleep, while Ctesias places Cyrus' death clear on the other side of the empire in regions of present-day Turkmenistan. While one could reasonably assume that such discrepancies are the result of drastically different historical sources, the storytelling elements of Herodotus, Ctesias and Xenophon may lend credence to an alternative explanation. Rather than represent historical disagreement, each narrative is chosen and carefully crafted to reflect each other's desired interpretation.

The speeches of Thucydides' history of the Peloponessian War utilizes literary elements that help Thucydides establish characters engaging in dialogue.[53] In doing so, Thucydides is able to insert his own commentary on normative themes, such as justice.[54] Similar focus on themes rather than the veracity of core events can be found in not only Greek tragedy, but also similarly "historical" works such as Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* use historical frameworks to develop common ideals and values for the Greek aristocracy. For example, in the first book of the *Cyropaedia*, Cyrus the Great is exalted as the ideal leader, formed not only through natural talent but also through the lessons Persian nobility learn as boys.[55] By placing them in the framework of the historical Cyrus, these themes and ideals are lent a level of legitimacy and therefore acceptance.

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[53] Lebow, 547
[54] Ibid
[55] Xenophon, Cyropaedia, I.6-7

Realists, constructvists and structuralists have long turned to classical works to further justify their own theoretical powerstructures. Greek storytelling in particular fits well within these frameworks. For instance, while Thucydides' Peloponessian War has long since been the poster child for classical realism, the transformational power of Herodotus and Xenophon contribute to narrative survival of the fittest where the Athenian Empire is justified based on its actions or power projection rather than through diplomacy or mutual agreement. At the same time, Greek tragedy and epic poetry can be interpreted as heavily constructivist tools in creating the normative models and expectations for intra- and innerpoleis interaction. Interpreted tragically, the Greeks may have superimposed the cycle of *hubris* and *hamartia* over Athen's experience during the Peloponessian War. While

However, the most interesting examinations of power come when combining the different theoretical frameworks. For instance, while realism may be distilled into the competition for domination in the anarchic space of the international, a la the Melian Dialogue, that space is largely defined by the stories constructed by Hellenic culture via Homer. Furthermore, political realism bases the motivation of its actors on human nature but that human nature is as explored in Greek storytelling, via poetry and drama, as it is in Greek sciences, such as Aristotle's *Politics* or *Rhetoric*. The line between these two categories, however, is blurry and reflects the Greek's focus on knowledge rather than any type of objective truth.

# VI. Didactic Storytelling in Early Modern Europe: Shakespeare's Henry V

Literature in post-antiquity Europe bears both a resemblance to its Greek predecessors while also being markedly different. What is notable, however, is that stories, via literature, and science/philosophy begin diverging in a much clearer way in regards to knowledge and truth production. However, this is not to say that literature completely sheds its didactic power. In this section, we will examine Shakespeare's Henry V as a prime example of fiction's didactic power in early-modern Europe.

Shakespeare's *Henry V* stands out as both critical and didactic for the modern sovereign. Inspired by Macchiaveli's *Prince*, Henry V is as much political commentary as entertainment. Like Greek drama, there are common themes within all of Shakespeare's historical plays, especially regarding the traits of a leader, as well as the classical *hamartia* foundin Greek tragedy. Like Greek storytelling, Shakespeare's *Henry V* also exerts a level of power upon political discourse during the early Modern period in Europe.

First, *Henry V* is historically transformative in nature. There is perhaps no piece of English literature so responsible for the development of Henry V as a character, and the play serves to rehabilitate England's role in the One Hundred Years War as much as it does Henry's own character. For instance, Henry V, which concludes the Henriad tetralogy, depicts the English as being ultimately victorious in the One Hundred Years War. The image of the victorious English would resonate even hundreds of years later, with uniquely interpreted productions in the 1940s reflecting the United Kingdom's new war in Europe. Yet *Henry V* arguably overemphasizes the "clean war" nature of Henry's conquest, with the slaughter of French prisoners at the conclusion of Agincourt couched as justified retaliation for the French attack on

baggage and the slaughter of the non-combatant pages.[56] *Henry V,* as a history, is also incomplete; Henry would die not too long after the birth of his successor, leaving England vulnerable and leading to its ultimate defeat in the Hundred Years War. It would be unfair to call this historical dishonesty, however. Instead, Shakespeare changes the narrative tone more than he changes actual events. Using the language of Hayden White, Shakespeare uses narrative to reinterpret or reorder the facts around Agincourt, leaving the audience with a different impression of the events. This is accomplished through the characterization of Henry V during the course of the play. This transformative characterization also blends heavily into the normative elements and can not be overlooked. Like the *Iliad*, Henry V is a war story that is as much about conduct as combat. And like Xenophon's *Portrait of Cyrus* or Machiavelli's *Prince*, there are embedded elements on the proper conduct of both a sovereign and general. In King Henry's case, the play contains several references not only to the proper conduct of a sovereign at home but abroad as well. When King Henry forces Harflouer to surrender, he assures the town's leader that surrender shall be met with mercy, resistance with unbridled force.[57] Later again, Henry chooses to hang a common soldier and former friend Bardolph for looting, despite Henry's orders against the despoiling of French territory. Through his actions on the page and stage, Henry is used to create the ideal image of an English king: competitive, cunning, and rationally acting. These narrative threads and softening of Henry's image would have far reaching effects, allowing the narrative to be reused and repurposed by the UK in the 1940s. The transformative and normative elements of *Henry V* are therefore not just applicable in the 16th century, but remain malleable and adaptable enough to exert power in the 20th century as well.

[56] Shakespeare, *Henry V*, IV.viii
[57] Ibid III.iii

Throughout Shakespeare's literary corpus, the theme of English identity is also prevalent, especially in an era where England was transitioning from a nation to an empire. In *Henry V,* the identity and status of the English soldier is explored in Henry's St. Crispin's Day speech. Despite the lowly nature of most of Henry's army, he famously states that all who stood with him at Agincourt was his "band of brothers."[58] If taken at face value, Henry elevates the status of the Englishman. Similar to Arendt's view on the stories and the polis being the repository of deeds and the legacy of men, Henry goes on to claim that those who missed the battle "shall think themselves accursed they were not here."[59] For Henry, it is not just the act of being there that adds value to the participants of the battle. Rather, it is the story that is continually told that reinforces identity as an Englishman.

Despite these elements of power, Shakespeare's works have noticeably less impact on the international political world than that of Greek literature. One reason may be that Shakespeare's stories would already be competing with scientific or academic treatise for influence in political discourse. By Shakespeare's time, political writiers such as Hooker and in following decades Hobbes would all but abandon the framework of storytelling in favor of the modern political treatise. Furthermore, while Shakespeare's works would find traction and translation across Europe and later the world, their impacts would be primarily through a scholarly lens. These works could indeed influence political thought, but their norms would no longer apply to their readers in a meaningful way.

The focus on hard sciences in the 16th century, such as the naturalistic work of Francis Bacon, may also align with the heavily realist works of Machiavelli and even Shakespeare. Despite the heavy reliance on notions of fate in Shakespeare, the roots of conflict in the historical

[58] Ibid IV.iii.18-67
[59] Ibid

plays are primarily based on human emotions and failures, with very little supernatural intervention, a stark contrast from Greek drama dominated by divine figures. Like the realist philosophy proposes, Shakespeare depicts a world in which strong characters like Henry, or even Julius Caesar, struggle against human intrigue, passion, and violence, and those who exert power are ultimately successful, such as Henry, while the naive and passive are doomed to failure, such as Caesar. The historical plays, with their themes on proper leadership and conduct, would bear resemblance to Greek works yet at the same time compete directly against other forms of knowledge production at the time. In many ways, because Shakespeare drew directly from earlier and contemporary political commentary, especially that of Machiavelli, the play represents interpretations and reframings of existing political thought rather than new, unique sources.

## VII. Didactic Storytelling Today: Television, Netflix and the Return of Post-truth stories

It is difficult to draw literary examples from modernity that have the same impact as above examples. This is not to say that literature has lost its power. Written fiction can still have the same transformative, identity, and normative power. However, there are several reasons for literature's diminished role in international politics.

The first is the change in political shareholders. While the written word has never been more accessible, the share of power in modern society is vastly different. In Greek antiquity, the number of stakeholders in any international or at least inter-poleis matters would have been relegated to an oligachical elite or in some cases a sovereign monarch. Incidentally, these elites

would have had the most access to literature in the form of oral or written stories. Furthermore, they would have had the most interest in following the norms of past heroes and leaders. The variety of government systems today means that works with normative powers do not appeal to as wide a group of shareholders. The world has also grown in scope since antiquity, with fewer didactic stories having universal appeal. Vastly different governments have led to vastly different ideals and values.

So then what replaces literature as fiction's vehicle into the political? One could argue that all forms of media contribute to fiction and storytelling's power. Two forms of storytelling stand out in particular: journalistic narrative, visual entertainment.

The narrative turn in IR has seen a number of non-traditional works join IR canon, such as Dauphine's *Politics of Exile*. Yet the narrative turn has also seen new academic focus on the role of narratives employed by international political entities. In short, the stories that nations or national organs play a role in how nations perceive and interact with each other. Narrative IR does, however, require the writer to observe a certain level of ethical standards in regards to truth. Because of this framework surrounding narrative IR, it is outside of the scope of this project.

However, storytelling's modern role is by no means exclusively top-down. Media outlets such as Netflix and Amazon have created a world more interconnected by stories than ever before. Works of storytelling no longer wait decades or centuries to suffuse across national boundaries. Instead, Hollywood, Bollywood, and Nollywood all transmit stories across the world simultaneously, directly to shareholders without intermediaries. At no other point in human history has mankind had such easy access to stories. But what does this mean for the political? For one, it means that discourse surrounding outside groups no longer belongs exclusively to the

domestic. The average Greek would have spent most if not the entirety of their lives without meeting a Persian, and the discourse around the Persian Empire would have stemmed almost exclusively from Greek sources. It is telling today that nearly all that we know about the Achaemenid Empire comes from Greek sources. Yet the average person today "meets" nationals from across the world on a near daily basis through not only domestic but international media. The friend/enemy distinction derived from stories is no longer governed by internal storytelling but competes with tales from across borders. Because of the self-reporting nature of stories, discourses are muddled, and the "truth" of the discourse becomes even more blurred. The availability and variety of stories available also has important implications for Arendt's position. If in Homeric Greece, stories helped turn men to men and men to poleis, what communities do Netflix specials create when not bounded by traditional borders? Identities based on stories are no longer based exclusively on the geographic communities where one resides but rather through digital availability.

So what of storytelling and narrative power in the present era? Aside from the obvious answers found in modern propaganda and espionage, very little has actually changed. Instead of the power of storytelling having changed, the stories themselves have. Identities are still based on fictional works, however written literature, especially historical literature, does nothave the central function it did in antiquity. The role of stories in developing cohesive identities is no less powerful. Fanbases for Netflix series, games or even cartoons sometimes climb into the millions by number of participants, with each fanbase maintaining its own unique language for discourse in forms of memes and inside jokes. These communities do not fit neatly within traditional power structures as seen by international relations scholarship. For instance, the transgeographic and transnational communities created by new forms of fiction act with a level of agency that is

not considered in classical or neo- realism. However, depending on the strength of the fanbase, patterns of discourse can transmit from fanbase to society at large via cultural osmosis. Does such cultural influence matter to the study and practice of international politics?

Such forms of entertainment can have transformative qualities as well. For instance, the recent renaissance of historical fiction programs, such as Hulu's *The Great*, a program based on Catherine the Great's rise to power, depict actors of color in positions of Russian aristocracy. The programs make no mention of these casting choices in fiction. By doing so, the program writers do two things. The first is that it challenges and alters historical perceptions of 18th century Russia. The second is that by ignoring a historical detail, the ethnographic make-up of 18th century Russia, the programmers are doing more than including actors of color in hiring practices. They are taking a position on the unimportance of skin color in Russian aristocratic circles. The normative consequences of this decision are also clear. As more programs include women and people of color in historical programs, despite historical whiplash, it paints the picture of an ideal past; one in which the racial and gender injustices are undone and are made right. Adler and Drieschova's "The Epistemlogical Challenge of Truth Subversion to the Liberal International Order " explores how truth subversion is used to wear the fabric of the Liberal International Order. There, the structures of international governance are reliant on truth and therefore vulnerable to its subversion, in the vein of the Trump era "alternative facts".[60] The same subversion of truths is also being used by modern storytelling to wear away the structural meanings in international relations. In the case of programs like "The Great", as well as stage productions like *Hamilton*, where actors of colour often play the American Founding Fathers,

[60] Emmanuel Adler and Alena Drieschova. "The Epistemological Challenge of Truth Subversion to the Liberal International Order." International Organization 75(2)(2021): 359–86.

instead wear away historical narratives that are considered “true”, in favour of idealized narratives.

However, does this constitute power in international politics? The answer to that depends on one’s interpretation of the actors and actions in IR. The classical realist might assume that ultimately the battle of dominant narratives through stories and fiction represents the same level of competition for power that pervades the realist world. The constructivist might argue that changing the historical context through these programs in turn changes the event's historical meaning. Foucault states that histories are merely fictions, invented from political reality. By altering the meanings behind historical depictions, modern storytelling is shifting focus towards new themes, not unlike the thematic/value approach to Greek storytelling.

## VIII. Conclusion

The above examples of storytelling’s power in IR is by no means comprehensive. Rather, the project has drawn upon alternative theories of power in politics in order to demonstrate that storytelling’s own power allows it to be a direct tool of international relationss, rather than simply a way to examine it. Even today, storytelling exerts power on both international and domestic politics. This power can be intentional, or simply a byproduct of the subject of the form of stories.

While the nature of truth production has drastically changed since Greek antiquity, and the line between history and stories is much clearer, stories in general still hold normative, categorical and transformative powers, especially with the return of post-truth stories. What this paper attempts to demonstrate is that the power of stories has not necessarily changed but that the

audience has and the context of stories in society, as well as the scope of international politics itself. The world has immeasurably progressed and grown since antiquity and while stories still do demonstrate normative examples or establish insider/outsider groups, modern literature does not have the same impact on international governance as literature of the past.

One reason for this is that the shareholders of power have changed dramatically. In antiquity and early modernity, the governing elite would have been expected to consume stories, especially those of a political nature. Political power is now vested in vastly different groups than in the Athenian polis or even Elizabethan England, and the contact between these shareholders across international borders is more common than ever. The shift towards the scientific in international relations has also contributed to the decline of stories in politics. As stated by Babik, the academic fields of not only IR but all human sciences have, since the 19th century, jealously guarded the gateway to the IR field. However, this is changing with the narrative and aesthetic turns of the 1980s and beyond, as well as the further acceptance, or at least tolerance, of the poststructuralist movement in the field of international relations.

Storytelling has not lost power in the 21st century, nor has its power changed. Instead, stories themselves have changed drastically in medium. Like the shift from poetry to prose, the shift from literature to television and streaming has carried with it drastic implications for not only storytelling as an artform but as a tool of international political change. And while the type of power storytelling exerts has not changed, it has been more widespread, targeted and perhaps even potent.

Furthermore, historical fiction in particular has returned to a focus on themes rather than total historic veracity. Embedded in these themes are modern values that apply not only domestically but internationally as well, and include equal representation of people of color,

women and even the LGBT+ community. In many ways, this reflets a return to the Greek mode of storytelling in the vein of Herodotus and Xenophon, in which the development of intersubjective values, both practical and ideal, was of far more importance than absolute historical integrity.

Finally, the above helps show that storytelling has and can continue to be a valuable tool of power across different schools of IR thought. Stories serve the self-interest of sovereign nations, develop international spanning structures that influence decision making, and create and change discursive meanings. As media becomes more globally focused and markets for entertainment become even more internationally linked, stories, be they on paper or the big screen, will continue to play a role in shaping how shareholders not only see others beyond their borders but how to interact with them as well.

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