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Introduction

Phil Perkins

Some books aim to tell you something: a book called *A History of the Classical World* might reasonably be expected to tell you what happened in the Classical world and when it happened. It might have a strong, authoritative narrative voice of the author telling you how it was – a reliable voice guiding you through unfamiliar territory. Other books might aim to show you something: *The Remains of the Classical World* would, hopefully, contain a number of images of what has survived from the Classical world and ancient written words that can still be read, in either the original or translated into a modern language. Such a book might present items from the Classical world as speaking for themselves and expect the reader to understand what they were saying. Another kind of book might be entitled *Finding out about the Classical World* and this might investigate how it is possible to know about the Classical world and consider the approaches and methodologies needed to understand what such voices from the past might be saying. So what is to be expected from a book entitled *Experiencing the Classical World*? Different people will have different expectations, but picking apart the words in the title should help to investigate how expectations might be shaped.

‘Experiencing’ is a slippery word. Who is doing the experiencing? Is this book about us, in the present, experiencing something from the past? Or is it about people from the past experiencing the world that they lived in? The slippery answer is that it is a bit of both. The only way to meet anything from the past is by experiencing it in the present. This experience might be travelling to visit an archaeological site where the physical remains from the past survive in the present. Yet how can we understand and interpret the experience? Prejudices, education, interests and emotions – in short, previous experience – all help to shape responses to the past. A schoolchild who visits a Roman museum and becomes fascinated by a fine-toothed bone comb in a glass case, may think ‘head lice!’ and after initial horror, empathise with a child who lived in the past, by relating the object with his or her own personal experience. The humble head louse (*pediculus humanus capitis* in Latin) speaks across the centuries. The survival of a fine-toothed hair comb enables a contemporary person to infer that people in the past suffered itching caused by parasitical insects and so know of something that a person in the past experienced.

An alternative way of meeting head lice from the past is to hear voices from the past telling of how people in the Classical world related to the parasites. Herodotus, one of the first historians in ancient Greece, describes

how in Egypt ‘The priests shave their bodies all over every other day to guard against the presence of lice, or anything else equally unpleasant, while they are about their religious duties’ (Herodotus, *Histories* 2.37). Another survival from the past is to be found in an encyclopaedia written by Pliny the Elder who was killed in the same eruption of Mt Vesuvius that destroyed Pompeii. He wrote ‘Nits are removed by dog fat, snakes taken in food like eels, or by the cast slough of snakes taken in drink’ (NH XXIX. xxxv) or else lice are treated by ‘taking the shed skin of a snake in drink’ or salted whey (NH XXX.xlix.144). He also recommended the application of powdered seeds of the staphis (*delphinium staphisagria*), preferably mixed with a special pine resin, to kill body and head lice (NH XXIII.xiii.18).

Both provide remedies and an indication of attitudes towards lice in different parts of the Classical world at different times. However, in the first case lice are not Herodotus’ main concern, he is describing in an authoritative way the rituals of Egyptian priests, whereas in the second Pliny is describing plants and animals and their medicinal uses. The first is an indirect, incidental observation whereas the second is a direct account of how to produce a remedy.

So it is possible to hear voices from the past, providing information for the present, but just as with any other information provider it is just as well to be critical and sceptical about the information they provide. How did Herodotus know about the rituals of Egyptian priests? Was his information accurate, and is that really why they shaved? How did Pliny know about remedies, and did they actually work? Both present their information as if it were reliable, but how is it possible to check on these pieces of ancient wisdom? Ideally, some other ancient testimony corroborating the information would help to establish the ultimate truth of the claims, but very often a piece of information or fact has only survived in the writings of one author and so independent verification is often lacking. Alternatively, in the case of Pliny’s remedies, it might be possible, if unwise, to attempt some experiments to test whether or not his remedies actually worked, or consider any usefully insecticidal properties of the ingredients he suggests. Yet the truth about whether or not the rituals existed or the remedies worked is not the only critical line of enquiry that may be explored.

Regardless of their veracity, the accounts both tell us about ancient attitudes towards lice. Herodotus, at least, and probably the Egyptian priests too, considered them to be an unpleasant pollution of the body. The accounts incidentally also tell us about attitudes towards the body and religious rituals. Pliny’s remedies also provide a cure, without even needing to express the desirability of exterminating the parasites. It is taken for granted that lice can be cured – just like any of the other diseases he discusses – through the application or ingestion of a preparation of natural

ingredients. What Pliny is deliberately passing on is the matter-of-fact knowledge of how to treat the undesirable malady.

Although we can read what voices from the past tell us we cannot hear them directly. The words have survived through a process of copying from ancient manuscripts and the editing of the surviving manuscripts into a reliable printed volume. These words have then been translated from ancient Greek and Latin into a modern language. Translation is not a neutral, clinical process of replacing a word from one language with a word from another. It is a more complex process aimed at translating not just meaning, but also expression, character and style from one language to another. In the Herodotus extract the word ‘unpleasant’ is used to translate the Greek, but the original Greek word can also carry the meaning of ‘impure’ and so support the idea that the priests needed to purify themselves. Once the ancient Greek and Latin languages have been learned there is still an effective translation into a modern language that takes place in order for a modern person to comprehend the ancient language. Gifted linguists or bilingual individuals may be able to ‘think’ in other languages, but individuals with such skills in ancient languages are exceptionally rare. Translating languages therefore modifies the way that we can experience the Classical world, by assimilating the concepts and expressions from the ancient world with appropriate concepts and expressions from the modern world. Just as an example, compare a 1918 translation of the epic poem *Aeneid* written by Virgil in 19 BCE of a tender reconciliation scene between the king and the queen of the gods ‘Cease now, I pray, and bend to our entreaties, that such great grief may not consume thee in silence, nor to me may bitter cares so oft return from thy sweet lips’ (Virgil, *Aeneid* XII.800–2; in Rushton Fairclough, 1918, p.355) with a more recent translation ‘The time has come at last for you to cease and give way to our entreaties. Do not let this great sorrow gnaw at your heart in silence, and do not make me listen to grief and resentment for ever streaming from your sweet lips’ (Virgil, *Aeneid* XII.800–2; in West, 2003, p.286). Both are faithful to the original Latin, but express the emotions and meaning using very different idiom and vocabulary. How we can experience the Classical world is mediated not only by the passage of time but also by how the past is presented to us, in this case as translated into another language and into prose.

A discussion of lice may seem to be an unusual place to start a book about the Classical world, as indeed it is, but it provides a counterpoint to the more traditional conceptions about the study of the Classical world. Traditionally, the Classical world has been a world of epic battles, gladiators, emperors and slaves; vases, fine sculpture and lofty architecture; poetry, history and drama; gods and goddesses. Some of the earliest

surviving western poetry, Homer's *Iliad*, takes the lives and passions of heroic warriors as its principal theme. The ancient biographer Suetonius writes about the achievements and misdemeanours of the first Roman emperors. Museums contain beautiful objects, collected together as the finest examples of their type, illustrating an ideal form of art with the potential to inspire contemporary artists. The emotion and passion of a love-struck Roman poet such as Catullus may be a model of expression and strike a chord in a modern heart. A Greek tragedy performed on a modern stage can still have the power to encapsulate human emotions and fallibility. Such traditional stereotypical views do not do justice to either the richness and complexity of the Classical world or the variety and subtlety of the investigations and interpretations that can be made while experiencing the Classical world. If this is the case, how did such stereotypes arise and why do they still persist?

A whole book could be written to answer these two questions, but here a few paragraphs will have to suffice. Stereotypes do not emerge from nowhere: where there is smoke there must be at least some fire, and the place to look for it is where Classical scholars have focused most of their attention. Study of the Classical world, since the European renaissance, has focused upon five principal areas: (1) criticism of ancient Greek and Latin texts and study of the ancient languages; (2) the reconstruction of a narrative history of the ancient world; (3) developing an understanding of ancient philosophy; (4) studying the physical remains of the ancient world (Classical archaeology); and (5) studying ancient art history. It is these five topics that dominated study of the Classical world up until the middle of the twentieth century at least. Textual criticism (1) started in fifteenth-century Italy and has as its aims the analysis of ancient texts, trying to establish edited versions of texts that are as close as is possible to the originals and to study the language, written records and literature of the Classical world. As well as establishing a standard text in the ancient language, textual studies also often produce translations of ancient works into modern languages. The writing of a translation simultaneously makes clear the meaning of the original language, since it needs to be understood before it can be translated, and also communicates the meaning and content of the ancient text in a modern language, making it accessible to people who are not expert in the original language. The range of texts that have survived is extremely wide – there is poetry, drama, history, biography, novels, epigraphs, records, commemorations, letters and even graffiti.

The study of ancient history (2) aims to distil facts from the texts that have survived from the past and to arrange and interpret them in order to provide an account of what happened in the past. As such it requires a high degree of accuracy and precision so that it is possible to assert that a certain

event occurred and to provide the supporting evidence for the occurrence in the form of a reference to an ancient text. These carefully researched sources then need to be interpreted and fitted into their historical background in order to understand historical processes and write a modern narrative of ancient history. Ancient philosophy (3), the study of what Greeks and Romans wrote about how they thought and how they understood the world, has been studied for a variety of motives: to understand the ancient world itself, to explore a world view – so, for example, in the Middle Ages, St Thomas Aquinas developed his own theological conclusions based on the thought of the ancient Greek, Aristotle; or to understand the history and development of contemporary philosophy.

Although some remains of the past, particularly buildings, survive and have been in use continuously, interest in antiquities (4) became a pursuit of the wealthy from the sixteenth century onwards. Following the discovery of Herculaneum and Pompeii in the eighteenth century, visiting Classical ruins as a part of a Grand Tour became an essential part of a gentleman's education. Artefacts collected and purchased in Greece and Italy became the core of the collections of many of the museums in Europe and America. The remains of ancient buildings which were found on archaeological sites and surviving descriptions in ancient texts provided a springboard for new designs by architects. Ancient styles of architecture inspired new buildings with columns and pediments, imitating the ancient orders of architecture. Archaeology and art history (5) are closely related, with perhaps a traditional division drawn between on one side, architecture alongside crafts and on the other, statuary, painting and the minor arts. Ancient art has been studied both in its own right, providing examples of high achievement in the visual arts but also as a source of inspiration for artists such as David, or designers such as Josiah Wedgwood.

These five areas of study – literature, history, philosophy, architecture and art – form the core of traditional studies of the Classical world. Through the nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries, these topics formed an essential part of a gentleman's education. Study of the literature and remains of the ancient world were seen as an excellent preparation for the (male) children of the ruling classes of Britain, Europe and America to perpetuate their hegemony and extend their rule around the world. A study of Roman or Greek politics provided the basis for a career in government. Heroic Classical warriors provided models of behaviour for aspiring soldiers. In short, the study of the classics became closely aligned with the ruling élite.

Models from the Classical world also became accepted as ideals of their kind. So advice provided by Marcus Tullius Cicero, an orator,

politician and philosopher from the Roman republican period, provided a basis for moral and political attitudes and expression. Classical Greek or Roman marble statues provided a model of male and female beauty to be both admired and imitated. The poetry of Homer or Virgil provided the best examples of epic poetry, which have not been surpassed. As a result, 'Classical' in English has come to mean both something that is ideal or pure, and also something that is an example of 'the best' of its kind. However, this is not a new idea, the notion of 'Classical' meaning 'the best' was even used by an ancient author Aulus Gellius writing in the second century CE. He considers whether the word 'sand' (*harena*) could be expressed as a plural 'sands' (*harenae*) since it is constituted by many grains of sand and whether the plural word '*quadrigae*' meaning 'four-horse chariot' could occur in the singular as '*quadriga*' since even if the horses are plural the chariot is singular. The question is resolved by saying that it would only be necessary to ask if 'any orator or poet, provided he be of that earlier band – that is to say, any Classical (*classicus*) or authoritative writer, not one of the common herd (*proletarius*) – has used *quadriga* or *harenae*' (Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* XIX.viii.15; in Rolfe, 1982, pp.377). 'Classis' in Latin, the noun from which the adjective '*classicus*' derives, means a social class, particularly the upper class, and so could perhaps be translated as 'first-class' but readily translates as 'Classical' since the meaning of the word in English coincides with the meaning of '*classicus*' in Latin. Aulus Gellius considers that the best Latin can be found in authors that he calls 'Classical', even in his own time. All of this might seem like pointless nit-picking, but it is the kind of erudite, refined discussion that has shaped the traditional attitude to Classics as the study of all that is best. Furthermore, the voice of Aulus Gellius speaking to us from the second century CE provides ancient support for this attitude.

It is this meaning of Classical that has become attached to Greek and Roman social, political and cultural development between the sixth century BCE and the fifth century CE. During this period, many of the positive cultural values such as heroism, democracy, liberty and rationality first emerged in the western world and so the period is seen in an idealised way. This is particularly true when the Classical period is fitted in to a larger scheme of western history, where it is preceded by uncivilised prehistory and followed by barbaric Dark Ages. However, these periods are themselves defined with reference to the Classical period: prehistory lacks the civilisation and history, barbarism lacks all that is good about the Classical world. At the same time all the negative aspects of the Classical world – slavery, high mortality, chronic warfare, despotism and oppression – are ignored. So 'Classical' is used selectively to describe periods, and also applied to cultures in other parts of the world where a particular stage of

development may be seen as ‘the best’. For example, in central America, the Classic period of the Lowland Maya civilisation (CE *c.*200–*c.*900) sees the development of writing, political sophistication, monumental architecture and cities, all of which is followed by a collapse in socio-political complexity and population levels. Meanwhile, in India the term ‘Classical’ meaning ‘the best’ is applied to art, literature and philosophy from the first millennium CE. All of these other ‘Classical’ civilisations have their own equally important place in the development of world culture, but this book will restrict itself to the Classical Mediterranean world of Greece and Rome.

The combination of the history of Greco-Roman Classical studies along with the notion that the Classical past provided perfect ideals and the ‘best things’ is one of the reasons why Classical Studies is often held to be an élitist subject, a study of élitist topics by students drawn from a social élite. Over the past centuries, the Greek, and especially the Latin, languages have been associated with controlling power and social élites. In the Christian West, Latin has been the language of spiritual power and religion in the Roman church and Latin the language of medieval states and their culture. Latin was taken by scientists as a universal language to classify the natural world, including the louse. Doctors, academics and lawyers expressed significant parts of their professional activities using Latin. As a result, by the twentieth century CE, Latin, and the Classical world, were firmly associated with the social and political élite of the western world. However, this is an image that modern Classical Studies is eager to escape from. Indeed, many researchers into the Classical world now try to redress this imbalance and study topics that are consciously non-élite. Furthermore, Classical Studies does not now simply consider the Classical world as an example of human perfection in order to emulate and imitate it – as it once did. Rather it aims to employ a critical methodology that develops a critical understanding of both the ancient past and the present. There is no longer the automatic assumption that Classical is ‘the best’, Classical is now a more neutral term describing a long and varied episode of human cultural development that had, and has, a significant influence over subsequent cultural practices, across large portions of the globe.

Modern Classical Studies – a name adopted in order to differentiate the study from simply ‘Classics’ which often implies a focus upon textual subjects – has also markedly increased its range of coverage, new topics such as comparative literature, anthropology, sociology, gender studies or human geography, for example, have now been added to the traditional range of topics that formerly comprised Classical Studies. These have brought with them a wider variety of approaches and methodologies. This

enlarged scope means that the discipline of Classical Studies now incorporates a diversity of sub-disciplines – all united by the fact that they may be studied as an aspect of the Classical world. This wide scope for Classical Studies presents both opportunities and challenges. The inclusiveness means that any aspect of human experience in the Classical world becomes a part of Classical Studies. What is more, the inspiration and examples that the Classical world provides for later cultures and societies, for example the renaissance period or indeed the modern world, can also become an aspect of Classical Studies. This potentially vast range of topics presents a challenge. How is it possible to explore all the different facets of the Classical world?

A traditional solution to this problem has been to subdivide the Classical world geographically and culturally into a study of Greece and Rome, thus giving a primary role to the ancient spatial distribution of the Greek and Latin languages across the Mediterranean region as a means of dividing up the Classical past. Time may also be used to approximately separate out a first millennium BCE when Greek cultural influence predominated from a first millennium CE dominated by Roman culture. Further sub-divisions come easily, with a more refined division of space or time, and also with the possibilities of separating out different spheres of cultural activity, for example language and literature, philosophy, art and archaeology. Following this logic, Classical Studies becomes a portfolio of specialised studies of restricted topics in great depth. Specialised study is fascinating and rewarding but it requires a high degree of training and experience in order to advance the frontiers of knowledge about the Classical world. Most of the contents of this book depend upon such specialist studies of one sort or another. They are the building blocks of a more generalised understanding of the Classical world. However, our knowledge and understanding of the Classical world are not simply the sum of these specialised parts. The stimulating and exciting challenge is to fit together the results of specialist studies in sub-disciplines so that they provide a wider view of the Classical world that adds up to a greater whole. This challenge has always been a part of Classical Studies, but now that the subject is drawing from an ever wider range of sub-disciplines, Classical Studies is becoming an extremely flexible interdisciplinary subject.

But what precisely is an interdisciplinary subject? An easy answer is to characterise it as one combining a variety of sub-disciplines – history, literature, art history, archaeology, language, for example. But what makes interdisciplinary work exciting is not only the range of different topics involved, but how they are combined, and how the combination provides new insights. A short case study can serve to illustrate some of the possibilities of an interdisciplinary approach.

The assassination of Julius Caesar is perhaps the best known single event in the history of the Roman republic. Caesar took too much personal control of political power in the republic, behaved like a king, was too popular with the people, and threatened to deprive the ruling élite of its power. The events are recorded by several ancient historians as either an historical episode or a part of Caesar's biography, and the background to the assassination have been thoroughly investigated by generations of scholars (see Essay Six). This case study is not going to add to those, but it will ask an interdisciplinary question and begin to explore some interdisciplinary answers. The question is where was Caesar assassinated, and what was the significance of that place? A number of ancient authors identify where Caesar was killed, it was a meeting place of the governing body of Rome, the senate, called the Hall of Pompey (the *curia pompeii*) (e.g. Suetonius, *Julius Caesar* 80). This hall lay at the eastern end of an open square (*porticus*) surrounded by columns and a covered walkway at the opposite end of which was the stage building of the first stone theatre in Rome, also built by Pompey after his triumphal return from conquering much of the eastern Mediterranean region in 62 BCE (Gros, 1999). Vitruvius, a Roman writer on architecture, says the *porticus* was constructed to provide shelter for the theatre audience in bad weather (*On Architecture* 5.9.1), but this functional explanation of the building is not completely satisfactory since it is the first of its type in Italy, and may well have been influenced by buildings Pompey had seen in Asia Minor while conquering the East. This would mean that the design of the building could also be seen as an result of cultural interaction between Rome and Asia. The *porticus* was a popular place to walk in the city of Rome; several poets describe it, including Martial, who says it contained two groves of trees, presumably providing shade, and it was larger than the Roman forum – the large square in the traditional centre of the city. Some of the theatre survives beneath modern buildings, and some walls and floors where you may be shown stains claimed to be the blood of Caesar are visible in the restaurants on the Via del Biscione. The *porticus* is not visible but its shape is known in detail since it survives on the *Forma Urbis Marmorea*, a plan of the city of Rome carved in marble and set on a wall near the centre of the city in the late second century CE. Only a small part of the plan has survived in fragments, but some of the fragments show the theatre, *porticus*, pergolas and some of the temples to the East that have been excavated in the Largo Argentina (Figure 1). They also show the back wall of the *curia pompeii*, which, according to Suetonius in his biography of Julius Caesar, was walled up and not used again by order of the senate after the assassination (*Julius Caesar* 88), and a statue of Pompey that had been there was moved to elsewhere in the *porticus*.

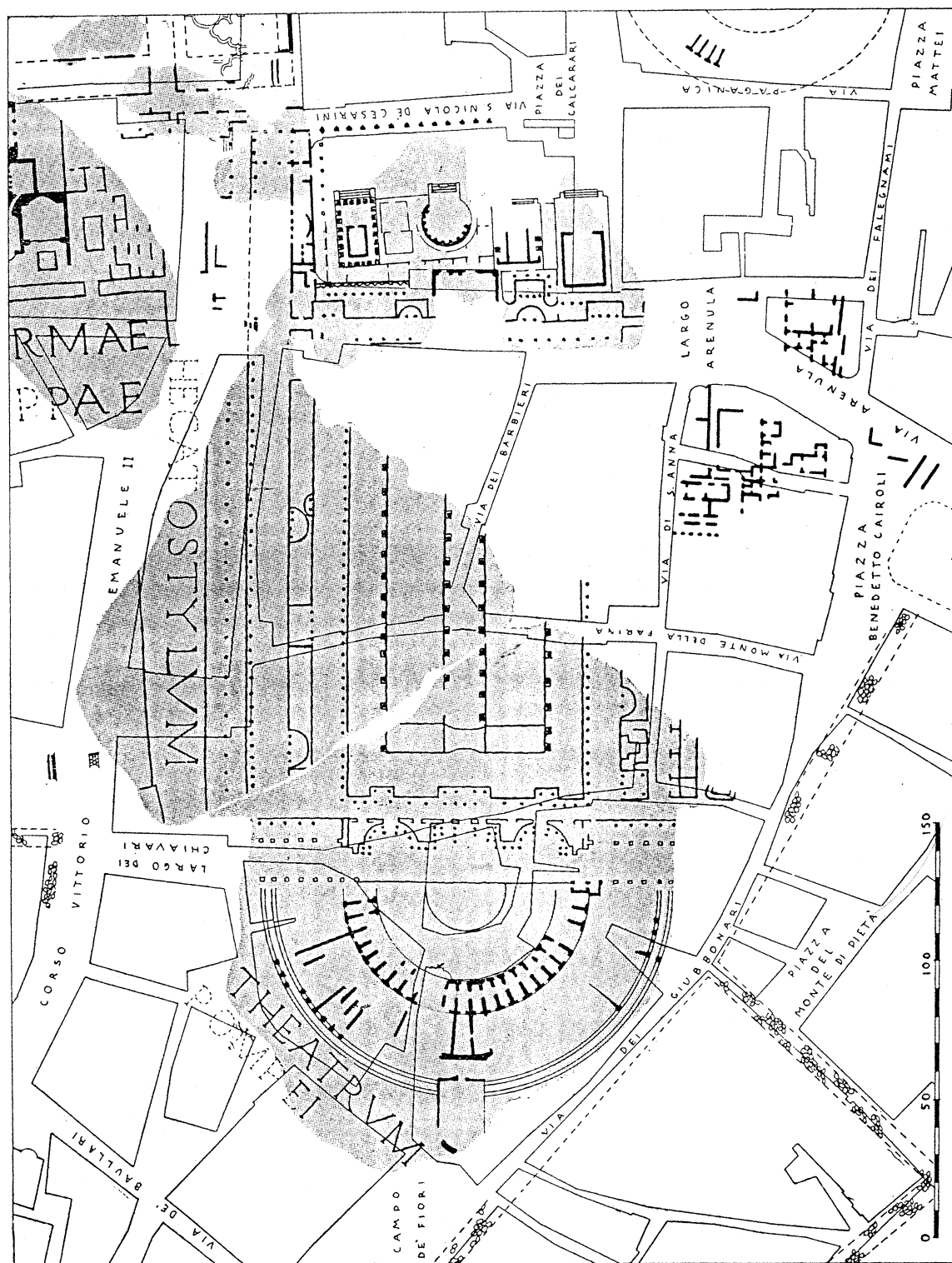


Figure 1 Plan of the streets of Rome overlaid with fragments of the *Forma Urbis Marmorea* showing the *curia pompeia* next to the circular temple on the right. (Reproduced from Steinby, E.M. (ed.) (1993) *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*, vol.1, Figure 123a.)

The place was deliberately chosen by the deadly conspirators and held an irony, since Pompey the Great (*Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus* to give him his Latin name) had been the greatest rival of Caesar and according to some authors (e.g. Plutarch, *Life of Caesar* 66) Caesar even fell at the feet of the statue of Pompey, or at least was pushed there (Figure 2). So the place of assassination of Caesar contained a political irony, even more so when put in an historical context since Pompey had also been stabbed to death, to please Caesar, four years earlier, after he had been defeated in battle. So it is possible to combine the historical descriptions of the murder, other literary references to the building and archaeological discoveries in Rome to gather a relatively detailed picture of the scene of the crime and its political significance, each of the sub-disciplines adding more information and combining to produce a more complex understanding of the place and its significance. Bringing more disciplines to bear – art history, epigraphy, mythology and literature – deepens the understanding further.

A detailed examination of the ancient texts mentioning the *porticus* and a study of some inscriptions found there, have enabled an Italian scholar,



Figure 2 Statue of Pompey from the *porticus* of Pompey now in the Palazzo Spada, Rome, c.55 BCE. (The head is a modern replacement.) Photo: © c.1890 Alinari Archives – Anderson Archives, Florence.

Filippo Coarelli, to identify some of the statues that stood in the gardens of the *porticus* (Coarelli, 1972). These findings have been interpreted by a French scholar, Gilles Sauron, to provide an interesting and credible explanation of the ideas behind the choices that were made about which statues to place in the gardens, and how these related to Pompey's public persona (Sauron, 1987). Ancient written sources tell us that the best artists were used (Pliny, *Natural History* 7.34) and that the statues were carefully arranged for Pompey by Atticus, a friend and financial adviser of Cicero, so we know for sure that there was some rationale behind the arrangement. All the known statues are of famous mythical and historical women and they may be divided into three categories – lovers or prostitutes (*hetairai*), poets and those famed for their extraordinary couplings and offspring. This seems an odd collection of women, but Sauron saw a connection between them and their patron goddesses: for the lovers, Venus, obviously enough; for the poets Minerva (or the Greek Athena); and for the super-fertile women, Juno, the queen of the gods. These three goddesses competed in a beauty contest for a golden apple, which became a cause of the Trojan Wars. Venus won. At the highest part of the Theatre of Pompey, a temple dedicated to Venus 'Victrix', 'the victorious', was built by Pompey to honour Venus, who was also his patron goddess. The pieces of the puzzle begin to fit together, and it becomes possible to see the arrangement of the statues as reflecting Venus' victory in the beauty contest, and this echoes Pompey's recent military victories in the East. In passing it is interesting to wonder how in Classical Rome it was possible for differently gendered victors to be so easily equated with one another. Could victory in a (male-judged) beauty contest be paralleled with victory in war in the modern world?

A further element of Sauron's interpretation involves the statue of Pompey: he is sculpted naked, with a cloak over his shoulder and a sword-belt across his chest – the traditional appearance of a hero – and he holds an orb, representing the cosmos in his hand. Therefore, while he is a spectacularly successful victorious general (*imperator*) he is also represented as a hero, and almost a god, in the presence of Venus. This mythological and religious association opens another possible strand of interpretation for the *porticus*. In Greek and Roman myth and legend, one famous and daring exploit of gods (e.g. Dionysis) and superheroes (e.g. Hercules, Orpheus, Aeneas and Odysseus) was visiting the underworld and conversing with the dead. In a famous passage of Homer's *Odyssey*, Book 11, its hero, Odysseus, travels to the ends of the earth and conjures the spirits of the dead, first Elpenor one of his companions (Figure 3), and then the seer Teiresias who foretells his future, and then his own mother who gives him news of his family. Following this, the hero meets a throng of fantastic women, the

wives and daughters of princes, lovers and mothers of gods. The early part of the scene is represented on a vase (Figure 3) made in Athens in the middle of the fifth century, at the same time as the Parthenon, and Odysseus appears dressed as a hero – naked, with a cloak, sword-belt and his distinctive hat. Four hundred years later, another hero, Pompey, is



Figure 3 *Pelike* (storage jar), the Lykaon Painter, Greek, Classical period, c.440 BCE. Place of manufacture: Greece, Attica, Athens. Ceramic, Red-figure. Height: 47.4 cm, diameter: 34.3 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The vase depicts Odysseus conjuring the spirit of Elpenor as Hermes (right) looks on. (Note the hero's costume is similar to Pompey's in Figure 2.)

represented in the same manner at one end of a *porticus* filled with statuary. The parallel is not precise, but Pompey before a host of extraordinary women, in a divinely charged setting, clearly evokes the image of Odysseus before the spirits of women who founded great human and divine dynasties. Could it be that placing Pompey in this context is drawing attention not only to his heroic status but also to his ambitions to found a ruling dynasty? Another insight is that in this mythic context the *porticus* becomes an entrance to the underworld, populated by its potent spirits. These infernal associations would have provided a further ironic twist to the choice of place to assassinate Julius Caesar.

So this case study, tracing links from a historical and political event to a context investigated through archaeology, architecture, art, epigraphy, mythology, religion and literature provides a demonstration of how it is possible to enrich the understanding of a single episode through interdisciplinary investigations. Inevitably it will never be possible to reconstruct all aspects of the Classical world and experience its original variety and richness. However, a broad interdisciplinary approach can help to build an appreciation of its texture and complexity and to go beyond events and facts and work towards the interpretation and understanding of their significance.

Interdisciplinary study does not have a fixed methodology, there is no correct way to combine the results of different specialist studies. Equally, there can be no fixed set of sub-disciplines to bring to bear upon a particular topic. Often the relevance of a sub-discipline will be dictated by the nature of the surviving evidence. Statues require artistic analysis, and buildings architectural analysis. But other avenues should not be excluded, in our case study literature and mythology provide a key to understanding that was not immediately apparent or obviously relevant to the surviving evidence. For this reason it is necessary to look for interrelationships and be open to the fact that one field may inform another.

This book both exemplifies and explores the interdisciplinary nature of the subject. None of the following essays combine all possible sub-disciplines to bear upon a single question or topic, but they do draw from different disciplines to explore the ancient world. The different essays explore different aspects of how we in the modern world can hear the voices of individuals – or indeed groups – from the ancient past and what those voices can tell us about experiencing the Classical past.

This final part of the introduction will highlight, very briefly, the interdisciplinary approaches of each of the essays, concentrating on describing their methodology rather than summarising their content. In the first essay some basic issues are discussed, drawing widely from different sub-disciplines to focus upon concepts of time and how they were, and are,

used to structure and characterise cultural change. The second essay by Chris Emlyn-Jones considers the extent to which our knowledge, specifically in this case of the Homeric world, is shaped by the surviving evidence and how the approaches of different sub-disciplines produce different, and not easily reconcilable, conclusions. Naoko Yamagata brings different literary approaches to the study of poetry in order to critically investigate whether Homer and other early poets have individual voices. The theme of the individual in the past is extended to the individual in society by James Robson in his investigation of fifth-century BCE Athens that draws from literary, linguistic, cultural and sociological approaches. All of these sub-disciplines are drawn together to analyse Athenian voices. A different range of sub-disciplines – theatre, ideology, history and politics – are brought to bear on Athens by Lorna Hardwick who provides a complementary analysis of Athenian culture, politics and society.

Moving to Rome, but staying with a highly competitive society, Paula James brings literary, poetic analysis to bear upon the question of how the voices we hear from the past shape our perception of it. Carolyn Price uses philosophical and literary approaches to analyse a very individual voice from the past and investigates the tension between ancient words and deeds. In contrast, Valerie Hope investigates a far less vocal group, analysing the perception of children through literary and sociological approaches. The final essay, also by Valerie Hope, considers a collective voice using historical, sociological and literary approaches.

Together the essays investigate a wide range of experiences of ancient individuals and groups, paying attention to how we interpret and experience their voices using interdisciplinary approaches. This introduction started by suggesting that some books aim to tell you something, this book hopes to introduce you to some ways of experiencing the Classical world.

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