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OF ANCIENT
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CONTENTS

<i>List of figures</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>List of tables</i>	xix
<i>Preface and acknowledgements</i>	xxi
PART I APPROACHES TO GREEK ARCHAEOLOGY	
1 Introduction: Classical Archaeology and its objects	3
2 Great traditions: Classical scholarship and Classical Archaeology	17
3 Modern archaeologies of Greece	42
4 Chronology and terminology	60
PART II: ARCHAIC GREECE, 1000–479 BC	
5 Early Iron Age Greece, 1000–700 BC	77
6 The Aegean, the Levant and the West: the Orientalising phenomenon	102
7 Gods, heroes and sacred places	134
8 The city, the state and the polis	165
9 Art, narrative and monumentality	195
10 Regional archaeologies	231
PART III: CLASSICAL GREECE	
11 Defining the Classical: Classical art	269
12 Cities and sanctuaries of Classical Greece	294
13 The archaeology of democracy: Classical Athens	329
14 Beyond the polis: the countryside of Classical Greece	376
15 Epilogue: towards Hellenistic archaeology	400
<i>Further reading for each chapter</i>	420
<i>Bibliography</i>	429
<i>Index</i>	477

FIGURES

The following abbreviations are used in giving photographic credits and museum numbers.

Acr.	Acropolis Museum, Athens
ASCS Athens	The American School of Classical Studies at Athens
BM London	The British Museum, London
BSA	The British School at Athens
DAI Athens	Deutsches archäologisches Institut, Athens
DAI Rome	Deutsches archäologisches Institut, Rome
EFA	Ecole Française d'Athènes
Hirmer	Hirmer Verlag, Munich
Inv.	Inventory Number
KER	Kerameikos, DAI photo number
Met. Mus.	Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York)
Neg. nr.	negative number (or photo number)
NM Athens	The National Museum, Athens (sometimes Athens NM)
TAP	Tameion Archaialogikon Poron (Archaeological Receipts Fund, Ministry of Culture, Greece)

1.1	Nessos amphora (Athens NM 1002; Hirmer neg. nr. 56i.027i; courtesy Hirmer)	<i>page</i> 4
1.2	Delphi Charioteer (Hirmer neg. nr. 561.0603; courtesy Hirmer)	8
2.1	Laocoön, Vatican Museum (Vatican Museum nos. 1059, 1064, 1067; Hirmer neg. nr. 67i.9316; courtesy Hirmer)	19
2.2	Red-figure hydria, name vase of the Meidias painter, BM London E.224 (GR 1772.3–20.30) (as illustrated in Burn 1987: plate 1a) (courtesy BM London, neg. nr. PS 117320)	24
2.3	Map of Greece, showing major sites (drawing H. Mason)	40
3.1	Map of Greece, showing relief and regions (drawing H. Mason)	43
4.1	Chronological chart (drawing H. Mason)	62

4.2	Siphnian treasury, front view (after Daux and Hansen 1987: 225, fig. 133) (courtesy EFA and Museum of Classical Archaeology Cambridge)	68
5.1	Iron finds from the Areopagos warrior grave (after Blegen 1952, drawing H. Mason)	83
5.2	Plan Unit IV.1 at Nichoria (after McDonald <i>et al.</i> 1983: 36, fig. 2.22) (courtesy Professor W.D.E. Coulson)	85
5.3	Lefkandi, plan of the large building at Toumba (the 'heröon') (after Popham <i>et al.</i> 1993, plate 38) (courtesy BSA)	87
5.4	Lefkandi, Toumba, reconstruction of the 'heröon' by J.J. Coulton (after Popham <i>et al.</i> 1993: plate 28) (courtesy BSA and Dr J.J. Coulton)	87
5.5	Protogeometric neck-handled amphora from Athens, Kerameikos grave 17 (KER 3420) (courtesy DAI Athens)	91
5.6	Middle Geometric belly-handled amphora from Athens Kerameikos (from grave 41, KER 4288) (courtesy DAI Athens)	91
5.7	Subprotogeometric pendent semi-circle skyphos from Lefkandi, Skoubris grave 59 (after Popham <i>et al.</i> 1980: no. 59A3, plate 109) (courtesy BSA)	93
5.8	Section through trench-and-hole cremation burial in Athens (Areopagos Warrior Grave D 16.4, after Blegen 1952, redrawn by H. Mason)	93
5.9	Plan of male cremation and female inhumation at Lefkandi, Toumba (after Popham <i>et al.</i> 1993: plate 13) (courtesy BSA)	95
6.1	Protocorinthian aryballos – Pergamon Museum Berlin no. 3319 (courtesy Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz)	103
6.2	Phoenician bronze bowl (T.55,28) from Toumba grave 55 at Lefkandi (after Popham and Lemos 1996: plate 133) (courtesy BSA)	104
6.3	Map of Mediterranean, showing major Greek and Phoenician sites (drawing H. Mason)	108
6.4	Map of Mediterranean, showing peoples and areas of Greek and Phoenician colonisation (drawing H. Mason)	109
6.5	Position of Gadir and Pithekoussai compared (drawing H. Mason)	114
6.6	Athens NM 804, a Late Geometric I belly-handled amphora from the 'Dipylon' cemetery in Athens (photo no. DAI NM 5945) (courtesy DAI Athens)	116
6.7	Protogeometric krater (no. 327) from the 'heröon' at Lefkandi, Toumba (after Catling and Lemos 1990: plate 54) (courtesy BSA)	119

- 6.8 Cesnola krater, a Euboean krater found in Cyprus, New York Met. Mus. 74.51.965 (neg. nr. 1573) (courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, Cesnola Collection) 119
- 6.9 Drawing of Protogeometric 'B' straight-sided pithos, flattened view (no. 107.178 from the North Cemetery at Knossos; courtesy BSA and Professor J.N. Coldstream) (after Coldstream and Catling 1996: fig. 111) 122
- 6.10 Orientalising two-handled pithos from tomb 285 in the North Cemetery of Knossos (no. 285.27) (after Coldstream and Catling 1996: fig. 139) (courtesy BSA) 122
- 6.11 The Greek and Phoenician alphabets compared (after Powell 1991: table II, simplified, redrawn by H. Mason) 129
- 6.12 'Nestor's cup' from Pithekoussai cremation grave 168 (after Buchner and Ridgway 1993: plates 107 and 108; photo DAI Rome neg. no. 54.1050) (courtesy DAI Rome) 132
- 7.1 Reconstruction of the altar of Zeus at Olympia (redrawn by H. Mason after Schleif 1934) 135
- 7.2 Reconstruction of early altar (altar III) from the Samian Heraion (redrawn by H. Mason after Schleif 1934: fig. 4) 139
- 7.3 Sixth-century marble votive column from the Acropolis (Lewis 1981 no. 487, DAI Athens neg. nr. NM 2403; as illustrated in Kron 1996: 161, fig. 14) (courtesy DAI Athens) 141
- 7.4 Bronze dress pins used as votives, from the sanctuary of Hera Limenia at Perachora (redrawn by H. Mason after Payne 1940: plate 136) 142
- 7.5 Bronze votive horse, probably of Corinthian manufacture (New York Met. Mus. 21.88.24; neg. nr. 13482 B) (courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund) 143
- 7.6 Reconstruction of hammered tripod from Olympia, zu 201 (Maas 1978: 178–80, table 48) (DAI Athens neg. nr. 74/1115) (courtesy DAI Athens) 145
- 7.7 Griffin protome from Kameiros on Rhodes in the British Museum, London BM 1870.3–15.16 (courtesy BM London) 145
- 7.8 Map of central Greece, showing position of major cities and sanctuaries (drawing H. Mason) 149
- 7.9 Early terrace wall at the Argive Heraion (photo author) 151
- 7.10 Sketch plan of early buildings at Olympia, showing position of earliest stadium (drawing H. Mason, after Brulotte 1994: fig. 6) 154
- 7.11 Reconstruction of Perachora temple model A (redrawn by H. Mason, after Payne 1940: plate 9b) 157
- 7.12 Hekatompedon I at the Samian Heraion (redrawn by H. Mason, after Walter 1990: 63, fig. 59) 158

7.13	Hekatompedon 2 at the Samian Heraion (redrawn by H. Mason, after Walter 1990: 83, fig. 92)	159
7.14	Reconstruction of the entablature of the temple of Apollo at Thermon, showing metopes (redrawn by H. Mason, after Kawerau and Soteriadis 1908: plate 49)	161
7.15	Columns from temple of Hera at Olympia (photo author)	162
8.1	Plan of eighth-century Eretria (redrawn by H. Mason, after A. Mazarakis-Ainian 1997: fig. 101)	170
8.2	Plan of Vroulia on Rhodes (redrawn by H. Mason, after Lang 1996: figs. 64 and 65 and Kinch 1914)	172
8.3	Building F in the Athenian Agora (redrawn by H. Mason, after Thompson and Wycherley 1972: 30, fig. 9)	173
8.4	Nikosthenic amphora, c. 530 BC (Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum GR-3-1962) (courtesy Fitzwilliam Museum)	177
8.5	Plate from Kameiros on Rhodes, showing hoplites duelling (Euphorbos plate, BM London 1860.4-4.1) (courtesy BM London)	180
8.6	Middle Geometric krater from Attica (New York Met. Mus 34.11.2) (courtesy The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fletcher Fund)	182
8.7	Helmet and cuirass from tomb T.45 from Argos, the 'Argos warrior grave' (after Courbin 1957: plate 1 and fig. 19) (photo courtesy EFA, Argos Excavations and the Museum of Classical Archaeology, Cambridge)	183
8.8	Early seventh-century Corinthian-style helmet from Olympia (Inv. B5615) (DAI Athens neg. nr. OL 6017) (courtesy DAI Athens)	183
8.9	Protocorinthian olpe known as the Chigi vase, Rome, Villa Giulia 22679 (Hirmer Neg. nos. 591.2036) (courtesy Hirmer)	184
8.10	Diagram of numbers of graves in Attica (after Morris 1987: 73, fig. 23 and Snodgrass 1980a) (courtesy Professor I. Morris)	186
8.11	Dreros law code (courtesy the Institute for the Study of Ancient Documents, Oxford, and the estate of Ann Jeffery)	189
8.12	Horos stones in Athenian Agora (Camp 1992: 51, fig. 30; courtesy ASCS Athens, Agora Excavations; neg. nr. 88-337)	191
8.13	Plan of Athenian Agora around 500 BC (redrawn by H. Mason, after Camp 1992: 37, fig. 21)	192
8.14	Aeginetan stater, or 'turtle' (courtesy Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (11.87 g))	193
9.1	Amphora showing the death of Aias, attributed to Exekias (Boulogne 558) (courtesy Musée de Boulogne and Museum of Classical Archaeology, Cambridge)	196

- 9.2 Small ivory plaque from Nimrud, showing a hero or god with a rampant lion (BM London 132940) (courtesy BM London) 197
- 9.3 Attic Late Geometric II krater (British Museum 1899.2–19.1; neg. nr. PS 234869) (courtesy BM London) 199
- 9.4 The Polyphemos amphora from Eleusis (DAI Athens no. Eleusis 544) (courtesy DAI Athens) 201
- 9.5 Scene showing Neoptolemos slaying both Astyanax and Priam on a belly amphora in Berlin, attributed to Lydos (Berlin Staatliche Museum 1685) from Vulci (photo by I. Geske, neg. nr. 7685N) (courtesy Antikensammlung Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz) 203
- 9.6 Attic red-figure hydria attributed to the Kleophrades painter (Naples, Museo Nazionale 24422, from Nola photo Hirmer neg. nr. 57i.0503) (courtesy Hirmer) 203
- 9.7 Outline drawing of various shapes of Greek pots, showing predominance of ‘symposion’ shapes (drawing H. Mason) 206
- 9.8 Early Corinthian column krater, from Caere, showing Herakles at the feast of Eurytios (Louvre E635) (courtesy Musée du Louvre; photo Chuzeville) 207
- 9.9 ‘Erskine’ dinos by Sophilos (London BM 1971.11–1.1; neg. nr. 118751) (courtesy BM London) 207
- 9.10 Black-figure volute krater, ‘the François vase’, signed many times by Kleitias and Ergotimos, from Chiusi (Museo Archeologico Florence 4209; Hirmer neg. nr. 59i.2125) (courtesy Hirmer) 211
- 9.11 Tondo (i.e. interior) of cup signed by Exekias (Munich Antikesammlungen 2044; Hirmer neg. nr. AM 2044) (courtesy Hirmer) 212
- 9.12 Wooden statue from the Samian Heraion (Samos Inv. H.41; DAI Athens Photoarchiv Samos 5476; after Kopcke 1967: fig. 45,1) (courtesy DAI Athens) 214
- 9.13 Nikandre, dedication from Delos (NM Athens Inv. No. 1) (photo courtesy TAP) 215
- 9.14 Kouros from Sounion, Athens NM 2720 (photo courtesy TAP) 216
- 9.15 ‘Kleobis and Biton’ (possibly in fact the Dioskouroi) from Delphi (Delphi Museum nos. 467 and 980.1524, Hirmer neg. nr. 592.0516) (courtesy Hirmer) 218
- 9.16 ‘Kroisos’ from Anavyssos, the Anavyssos kouros (Athens NM 3851; Hirmer neg. nr. 56i.0409) (courtesy Hirmer) 219
- 9.17 Distribution map of kouroi (redrawn by H. Mason, after Renfrew and Cherry 1986: 12, fig. 1.10) 221
- 9.18 The ‘peplos’ kore from the Athenian Acropolis, front view (Acr. 679; Hirmer neg. nr. 654.1908) (courtesy Hirmer) 222

9.19	Kore from the Acropolis, about 500 BC (Acr. 674; Hirmer neg. nr. 654.1906) (courtesy Hirmer).	222
9.20	Plan showing method of construction of temple of Aphaia on Aegina (after Furtwängler <i>et al.</i> 1906: plate 36)	226
9.21	Plan of temple of Aphaia on Aegina, with scale (after Furtwängler <i>et al.</i> 1906: plate 2)	226
9.22	Plans of Ionic temples: (a) the temple of Artemis at Ephesos, c. 550 BC; (b) the fourth temple of Hera on Samos, c. 530 BC (redrawn by H. Mason, after Snodgrass 1986: 56, fig. 3.7)	227
9.23	Detail of part of the north frieze of the Siphnian treasury at Delphi (Hirmer neg. nr. 561.0617) (courtesy Hirmer)	229
10.1	Map of Attica, showing sites in use in the seventh century BC (drawing H. Mason)	235
10.2	Plan of seventh-century Kerameikos cemetery (redrawn by H. Mason, after Houby-Nielsen 1995: fig. 1)	238
10.3	Plan of graves and Opferrinne gamma in the Kerameikos (after Kübler 1959: fig. 9)	239
10.4	Beaker or mug (one of the 'Kerameikos mugs') from the Kerameikos cemetery (Opferrinne beta, Anlage IX, no. 73) (photo DAI Athens, KER 2975) (courtesy DAI Athens)	239
10.5	Map of Crete, showing major sites (drawn by Ian Dennis)	242
10.6	Idaeon Cave shield, the so-called Hunt Shield (Heraklion Museum 7; Kunze 1931: 8–12 no. 6) (Redrawn by H. Mason after Kunze 1931: fig. 1)	244
10.7	Map of Crete, showing distribution of major sixth-century legal texts (drawn by Ian Dennis)	246
10.8	Helmet from Afrati, no. H2 (after Hoffmann 1972: plate 9; Met. Mus. 1989.281.49) (photo courtesy H. Hoffmann and Metropolitan Museum in New York, Gift of Norbert Schimmel Trust)	249
10.9	Sixth-century Cretan hydria from Tocra (Tocra 921; after Boardman and Hayes 1966: plate 55) (courtesy BSA)	249
10.10	Gold mask and helmet from grave 115 at Sindos, in the Museum of Thessaloniki (after Votokopoulou <i>et al.</i> 1985: 149 nos. 239 and 240) (courtesy TAP and Museum of Thessaloniki)	255
10.11	The development of the Kerameikos cemetery, from 600 BC, phases 1 and 2 (redrawn by H. Mason, and after Houby-Nielsen 1995: figs. 2 and 3)	259
10.12	The development of the Kerameikos cemetery, phases 3 and 4 (redrawn by H. Mason, after Houby-Nielsen 1995: figs. 4 and 5)	260

10.13	The development of the Kerameikos cemetery, phase 5 (redrawn by H. Mason after Houby-Nielsen 1995: fig. 6)	261
10.14	Large tumuli in late sixth-century Attica (redrawn by H. Mason, after Houby-Nielsen 1995: fig. 9)	262
10.15	Stele of Aristion (Athens NM 29), found at Velanideza in 1839 (photo ASCS Athens, Alison Frantz Collection AT 221) (courtesy ASCS Athens)	263
11.1	Apollo (figure L) from the west pediment of the temple of Zeus at Olympia (Hirmer neg. nr. 56i.0667) (courtesy Hirmer)	272
11.2	Riace warrior A (Hirmer neg. nr. 834.2002) (courtesy Hirmer)	273
11.3	Horse of Moon's chariot from the north corner of the east pediment of the Parthenon, no. 303, O (Smith 1892: 115–16; BM London neg. nr. 190234) (courtesy BM London)	274
11.4	Nike of Paionios of Mende (Olympia 46–8; Hirmer neg. nr. 56i.0636) (courtesy Hirmer)	275
11.5	Roman copy (or version) of the Aphrodite of Knidos by Praxiteles (Vatican Museum 812; DAI Rome neg. nr. 68.3650) (courtesy DAI Rome)	276
11.6	Half life-size bronze statue of a boy found off the coast at Marathon (Athens NM 15118; Hirmer neg. nr. 56i.0455) (courtesy Hirmer)	277
11.7	A 'portrait' of Socrates, Roman copy of a Greek original of the fourth century BC (Naples, National Museum 6129; DAI Rome neg. nr. 36.897) (courtesy DAI Rome)	278
11.8	Comparative plans temple of Zeus at Olympia and Parthenon in Athens (after Coulton 1977: 112, fig. 45) (courtesy J.J. Coulton)	280
11.9	Comparison of interiors of the temple of Zeus at Olympia and the Parthenon, showing how both were designed to accommodate giant chryselephantine statues (after Coulton 1977: 114, fig. 47) (courtesy J.J. Coulton)	281
11.10	Tholos at Epidauros, restored drawing of exterior (redrawn by H. Mason, after Tomlinson 1983: 63, fig. 12)	284
11.11	Tholos (or Thymele) at Epidauros, restored plan (redrawn by H. Mason, after Tomlinson 1983: 62, fig. 11).	285
11.12	Red-figure amphora of around 480 BC, name vase of 'Berlin painter' (Beazley's attribution; Berlin Staatliche Museum 2160; photo I. Luckert) (courtesy Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz)	288
11.13	Name vase of 'Niobid painter' (Beazley's attribution), calyx krater from Orvieto (Paris Louvre G 341; photo by C. Larrieu) (courtesy Musée du Louvre)	288

11.14	Pelike attributed to the 'Marsyas painter', from Kameiros on Rhodes (London BM E 424; neg. nr. PS 218799) (courtesy BM London)	290
11.15	Red-figure south Italian (Apulian) volute krater, attributed to the Ilioupersis painter (London BM F 283; neg. nr. PS 274269) (Trendall and Cambitoglou 1978: 193 no. 7) (courtesy BM London)	291
12.1	General plan of the sanctuary at Perachora, c. 400 BC (redrawn by H. Mason, after Tomlinson 1988: 168–9, fig. 1)	296
12.2	Sanctuary of Perachora, detail of Harbour area (redrawn by H. Mason, after Tomlinson 1988: 168–9, fig. 1)	297
12.3	Sanctuary of Perachora, detail of western area (redrawn by H. Mason, after Tomlinson 1988: 168–9, fig. 1)	298
12.4	Plan of the Argive Heraion, c. 400 BC (redrawn by H. Mason, after Lauter 1973)	300
12.5	Simplified plan of sanctuary of Epidauros (redrawn by H. Mason, after Tomlinson 1983: 40–1, figs. 3, 4 and 5)	303
12.6	Plan of Olympia, c. 350 BC (redrawn by H. Mason, after plans in Drees 1968 and Brulotte 1994: 62, fig. 6)	308
12.7	Plan of Delphi, c. 350 BC (redrawn by H. Mason, after Morgan 1990: 128, fig. 19)	309
12.8	Comparative plans of hestiatoria at Perachora and Delphi (drawing H. Mason, after Tomlinson 1969: 167, fig. 5 and Stansbury O'Donnell 1999: 179, fig. 76)	310
12.9	Overall plan of Olynthos, c. 350 BC (after Hoepfner and Schwandner 1994: 75, fig. 56) (courtesy Professors W. Hoepfner and E.L. Schwandner, Berlin and Munich)	316
12.10	Overall plan of Priene, c. 350 BC (after Hoepfner and Schwandner 1994: 191, fig. 179) (courtesy Professors W. Hoepfner and E.L. Schwandner, Berlin and Munich)	318
12.11	Blocks of houses at Olynthos (redrawn by H. Mason, after Robinson and Graham 1938: plate 94)	321
12.12	Villa of Good Fortune at Olynthos (simplified drawing by H. Mason, after Robinson and Graham 1938: plate 85)	323
12.13	Typical houses at Priene (reconstruction after Hoepfner and Schwandner 1994: 210, fig. 204) (courtesy Professors W. Hoepfner and E.L. Schwandner, Berlin and Munich)	326
12.14	Overall plan of Praisos (redrawn by H. Mason, after Whitley <i>et al.</i> 1995: 411, fig. 3)	327
12.15	Detail of rock-cut houses on Second Acropolis of Praisos (redrawn by H. Mason, after Whitley <i>et al.</i> 1999: 255, fig. 17)	328
13.1	Map of Attica, showing sites mentioned in text (drawing H. Mason)	330

13.2	The Old Bouleuterion, c. 490 BC (redrawn by H. Mason, after Thompson and Wycherley 1972: 30, fig. 9)	333
13.3	The Agora c. 400 BC (after Camp 1992: 89, fig. 66; ASCS Athens, Agora Excavations 86–501) (Courtesy ASCS Athens)	337
13.4	Successive phases of the Theatre of Dionysos (redrawn by H. Mason, after Travlos 1971: 540, fig. 677)	339
13.5	Theatre of Dionysos, final phase (redrawn by H. Mason, after Travlos 1971: 541, fig. 678).	341
13.6	Plan of the Hephaisteion (Camp 1992: 82, fig. 59; ASCS Athens, Agora Excavations neg. nr. 86–515) (Courtesy ASCS Athens)	344
13.7	Photo of Hephaisteion, from the south-west (Camp 1992: 83, fig. 60; ASCS Athens, Agora Excavations neg. nr. 81–477) (courtesy ASCS Athens)	345
13.8	View of western part of the Parthenon (ASCS Athens, Alison Frantz Collection AT 358) (courtesy ASCS Athens)	346
13.9	Plan of the Parthenon (after Jenkins 1994: 22, 12a) (courtesy Dr I. Jenkins and BM London)	346
13.10	Metope of Lapith fighting Centaur, south side of the Parthenon (S31; Smith 1892: 143, no. 320: BM London neg. nr. PS 284830) (courtesy BM London)	349
13.11	West side of Parthenon frieze (slab II, west frieze; BM London neg. nr. PS 284893) (courtesy BM London)	349
13.12	Drawing showing position of ‘peplos’ scene (after Jenkins 1994: 35, fig. 16)	350
13.13	Peplos scene from east frieze of Parthenon (slab V, figures 32–57; BM London neg. nr. B 3297) (courtesy BM London)	350
13.14	Plan of Parthenon frieze (after Jenkins 1994: 23, plate 12b) (Courtesy BM London and Dr I. Jenkins)	351
13.15	The Acropolis c. 400 BC (after Jenkins 1994: 19, fig. 8, redrawn by H. Mason)	354
13.16	Plan of Erechtheion, showing conjectural position of various statues mentioned in Pausanias (after Travlos 1971: 218, fig. 281)	355
13.17	The Long Walls of Athens and Piraeus, c. 430 BC (drawing H. Mason)	357
13.18	Houses on the slope of the Areopagos, south of the Agora (redrawn by H. Mason, after Camp 1992: 148, fig. 127)	358
13.19	Plan of Vari house (redrawn by H. Mason, after Jones <i>et al.</i> 1973: 362, fig. 2)	362
13.20	Plan of the Marathon tumulus (after Stais 1893: 49)	364
13.21	Drawing of the grave monument of Pythagoras of Selymbria (redrawn by H. Mason, after Hoepfner 1973: 148, fig. 3)	367

13.22	A white-ground cup by the Sotades painter (London BM D5; neg. nr. PS 144835) (courtesy BM London)	368
13.23	Restored elevation drawing of precinct of Koroibos showing position of Hegeso's grave stele (redrawn by H. Mason, after Knigge 1991: 132, fig. 127)	370
13.24	Grave stele of Hegeso (Athens NM 3624; photo Hirmer neg. nr. 56i. 0441) (courtesy Hirmer)	371
13.25	Drawing showing grave precinct of Dexileos (redrawn by H. Mason, after Knigge 1991: 112, fig. 107)	372
13.26	Grave stele of Dexileos, in the Kerameikos, Athens (Kerameikos P1130; photo DAI Athens KER 5976) (courtesy DAI Athens)	373
14.1	Farm complexes at Palaia Kopraisia (sites LE16 and LE17) in the area of the Atene survey (redrawn by H. Mason, after Lohmann 1992: 46, fig. 21)	379
14.2	Detail of house complex at Palaia Kopraisia (site LE16) (redrawn by H. Mason, after Lohmann 1992: 47, fig. 22)	380
14.3	Distribution of Archaic and Classical sites in the area of the southern Argolid survey (after Jameson <i>et al.</i> 1994: 239, figs. 4.22 and 4.23) (courtesy Professor M.H. Jameson, Stanford)	386
14.4	Distribution of Archaic and Classical sites in the area of the Keos survey (after Cherry <i>et al.</i> 1991: 334, fig. 17.6) (courtesy Professor J. Cherry, Ann Arbor)	387
14.5	Drawing of typical finds (loom weights etc.) from sites of Classical date in the Praisos survey (drawing by H. Mason, after Whitley <i>et al.</i> 1999: 245, fig. 16)	388
14.6	Olive-presses from Praisos (examples of spolia) (photo author)	390
14.7	Elevations of towers from Messene (redrawn by H. Mason, after Ober 1987b: 573, fig. 3 and 576, fig. 5)	393
14.8	Elevation of tower from Aigosthena (redrawn by H. Mason, after Ober 1987b: 586, fig. 19)	396
14.9	Plan of Eleutherai (Gyptokastro) (redrawn by H. Mason, after Ober 1987a: 213, fig. 8)	397
15.1	Colossal statue from the Mausoleum, thought to be a portrait of Mausolus (BM London 1000; neg. nr. PS 259873) (courtesy BM London)	403
15.2	Reconstruction of Mausoleum long side, showing position of sculpture (redrawn by H. Mason, after Jeppesen 1976: 51, fig. 2)	404
15.3	Reconstruction of Mausoleum, short side, showing position of sculpture (redrawn by H. Mason, after Jeppesen 1976: 57, fig. 5)	405

- | | | |
|------|--|-----|
| 15.4 | Bronze volute-krater from Derveni, tomb II (courtesy TAP and Museum of Thessaloniki) | 407 |
| 15.5 | Reconstructed section through tomb II ('Philip's tomb') in the great mound at Vergina (redrawn by H. Mason, after Andronikos 1994a: 98–9, fig. 55) | 409 |
| 15.6 | Plan of Palace at Vergina (redrawn by R. Westgate, after Andronikos 1994a: 43, fig. 18) | 413 |
| 15.7 | Marble head found at Yannitsa, near Pella, thought to be of Alexander (Pella Museum GL.15) (courtesy TAP and Pella museum) | 417 |
| 15.8 | Roman marble copy of the Demosthenes of Polyeyktos, now in Copenhagen Glyptothek (Copenhagen 2782; neg. nr. 436a, photo J. Selsing) (courtesy NY Carlsberg Glyptothek, Copenhagen) | 418 |

TABLES

5.1	Metal objects from Early Iron Age graves in central Greece (after Morris 1999: 211, fig. 6.2)	<i>page</i> 82
7.1	Pins found in Peloponnesian sanctuaries (after Osborne 1996a: 92, table 3 and Kilian-Dirlmeier 1984)	146
10.1	Child and adult graves from the seventh-century Kerameikos cemetery in Athens (simplified after Whitley 1994a: 54, table 3.2)	237
10.2	Pottery found in children's cemeteries in Attica (simplified after Whitley 1994a: 56, table 3.4)	237
10.3	Breakdown by context of types of pottery found in various contexts in the Kerameikos cemetery (simplified after Whitley 1994a: 57, table 3.5)	240
10.4	Pottery types from the Agora well deposits (simplified after Whitley 1994a: 55, table 3.3)	241
10.5	Archaic Cretan inscriptions (simplified after Whitley 1997b: 649–51, tables 5 and 6)	248
10.6	Archaic Athenian inscriptions (after Whitley 1997b: 641, table 1)	257
12.1	Numbers of bronze objects deposited in the sanctuary of Poseidon at Isthmia (from information provided by Raubitschek 1998)	311
12.2	Numbers of lead figurines deposited in the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia near Sparta (figures from Wace 1929, according to the chronology of Boardman 1963b)	311
14.1	Combined inventory of objects from two <i>koprones</i> from house 7 and house D at Halieis in the Peloponnese (after Ault 1999: appendix 1)	383

INTRODUCTION: CLASSICAL ARCHAEOLOGY AND ITS OBJECTS

1.1 Two objects

Classical Archaeology is pre-eminently an archaeology of objects. Much of what Classical archaeologists write has been concerned with the description and interpretation of certain classes of artefacts, artefacts of a very particular kind. Such objects are often striking and sometimes beautiful. They may even be considered art. Let us take a look at two of them, taken from two quite different periods in the Greek archaeological sequence.

Figure 1.1 shows a pot (Athens NM 1002) now on display in the National Museum of Athens. It is a large vessel, about 1.22 m (or 4 feet) high, known as the Nessos amphora, after the scene on the neck of the pot, which shows the hero Herakles slaying the Centaur Nessos. It was found in 1890 in the course of rescue excavations while building work was taking place in the Piraeus street area of modern Athens. In Antiquity this area was known to be a part of the Outer Kerameikos, a region which lay outside the city walls to the west of the ancient city.¹ It is conventionally dated to the end of the seventh century, and the general style of the pot can be called 'Late Protoattic' or 'Early Black-Figure'.² The painting on the surface of this pot, like a painting you might see hanging in one of the great galleries of Western Europe, has been 'attributed' to a particular craftsman or artist, named after the pot (or vase) itself, the 'Nessos painter'.³

To describe something in a certain way is also to begin to interpret it. I have listed above a number of facts or circumstances pertinent to our understanding of this pot. But before we describe or interpret something we have to have some idea of what we wish to learn from it; that is, we have to have some notion of what kind of evidence it is, and what it is evidence for. This is what archaeologists mean by the problem of approach, and it raises the question of how Classical archaeologists have traditionally looked at such objects. Which of these facts (some of which, to be truthful, are inferences) have been thought most important? And what role does this object play in the various stories scholars have wanted to tell us, stories about the art and archaeology of early Greece? Do we, for example, know the function of this pot? What it was actually used for is

¹ Kavvadias 1890: 4–5; Stais and Wolters 1891: 46.

² Early Black-Figure according to Beazley 1951: 14–15 (1986: 13–14); 1956: 4–5. Protoattic according to J.M. Cook 1935. ³ Beazley 1944; 1956: 4–5.



1.1 Nessos amphora

unclear; it was found, like its near contemporary the Kynosarges amphora,⁴ broken in many parts and associated with bones and ash. It has often been said that this vase, like its Geometric predecessors, served as a grave marker.⁵ Indeed its findspot, close to a known cemetery area of Late Geometric graves referred to at the time as the 'Dipylon', is consistent with this view. The excavator, Kavvadias, thought that it served as a container for a cremation.⁶ Kavvadias' description is, however, equally consistent with another interpretation; it could have come from what German excavators in the Kerameikos were later to call an 'Opferrinne' or offering trench, since the bones and ash of animals have been found associated with broken fineware pottery of similar date in offering

⁴ For the Kynosarges amphora, see Smith 1902; for its context see Droop 1906.

⁵ For example Robertson 1975: 54; R.M. Cook 1972: 71. Both here seem to be following Beazley 1951: 14–15.

⁶ Kavvadias 1890: 4–5; Stais and Wolters 1891: 46. See now comments by Osborne 1998b: 18–20.

trenches. These 'Opferrinnen' were often filled with the bones and ash of animals used in sacrificial meals.⁷

Soon after its discovery, however, the function of this pot swiftly became a matter of secondary importance. Once restored, its context became the National Museum of Athens, where it can be seen today alongside other vases of late seventh-century date. Here its style and iconography can be closely scrutinised. It stands with its decorated face open to view, its rear being covered with a few large strokes of the brush. On the lip is a frieze of ducks; below this, on the neck, a scene familiar to students of Greek literature: the hero Herakles slaying the Centaur Nessos (or Netos). Indeed there can be little ambiguity about the subject, as these images are accompanied by dipinti (painted labels) telling us exactly who is who.⁸ Beside the neck, on the handles, are some owls, and below them runs a frieze of palmettes. On the main body of the vase, Gorgons with wings, their tongues sticking out, stare out at the modern museum visitor. Below this a frieze of dolphins, and below that a cable pattern, can still faintly be discerned.

The careful reader may well ask, what is the point of this detailed description? Can we not see all this for ourselves? Descriptions not unlike this one, of objects not unlike this one, form a large part of many books on Greek archaeology and art. Such descriptions may form a prelude to an interpretation, as if interpretation flows naturally from description. And the careful reader (and viewer) may well be asking, what can this combination of images mean? Here we have to remember that the ancient viewer would have been familiar with the relevant myth or myths. One of the earliest versions of the story of Herakles and Nessos is to be found in Sophocles' play, *The Women of Trachis* (lines 555–81). Here Herakles' wife, Deianeira, recalls how Herakles killed Nessos (in this version, with an arrow) because the Centaur had tried to rape her. On the point of death, however, Nessos tells Deianeira to keep safe his blood. He tells her that if she ever finds that Herakles has fallen in love with another woman, she can, by making him wear a shirt dipped in the blood of Nessos' wound, return Herakles to her affections. Naively, Deianeira believes him, and the 'shirt of Nessos' proves the means by which Nessos, through Deianeira, contrives the death of Herakles. In the scene that we see here, Herakles kills Nessos. But an ancient viewer might also know that Nessos was to have his posthumous revenge.

The myth of Perseus slaying one of the Gorgons, Medusa, is in a sense the inverse of this.⁹ In the Gorgon's case, her ability to turn anyone who looks at her to stone is used by Perseus himself to good (or bad) effect, when he shows the severed head of the Medusa to Polydektes, a man who had attempted to force

⁷ For seventh-century Opferrinnen in the Kerameikos cemetery with deposits of ash and bones (probably the bones of animals from some kind of ritual meal) see Kübler 1959: 25, 29, 31 and 42.

⁸ For the painted labels, see Boeghold 1962; Immerwahr 1990: 20; Jeffery 1990: 76 no. 6a. The names are written retrograde (right to left), and 'Nessos' is spelt 'Netos'.

⁹ There are many versions of the Perseus myth. But we do know that one version at least was in circulation in neighbouring Boeotia in the years around 700 BC. The poet Hesiod mentions Perseus 'the Gorgon-slayer' several times (Hesiod, *Shield* 216–48; *Theogony* 280).

Perseus' mother, Danae, to marry him against her will. A viewer familiar with both myths might see the common theme that connects these two images as one of the inevitability of vengeance.

The difficulty with this interpretation is that we have to imagine an ancient viewer who can, as it were, read between the lines – that is, can supply the end of the story which the images leave out. Another possible answer to the question 'what do these images mean?' is that they are simply two scenes of violence: Herakles slays Nessos; whilst Perseus (who cannot be seen, but whose presence somehow has to be inferred) slays the Gorgons. The friezes of ducks and dolphins are there to provide some kind of narrative context. These images may then be plausibly related to others on Protoattic pots with funerary associations, such as the Polyphemos amphora from Eleusis (fig. 9.4). On this vase the neck shows another violent scene, one well known from book IX of the *Odyssey* (*Odyssey* IX.322–86): Odysseus and his companions blind Polyphemos. On the shoulder, one animal attacks another; and on the lower body, Gorgons stare out to 'freeze' the viewer. Both context and image suggest a common theme: death as deprivation of the senses. This linking theme has in turn been used as evidence to indicate that a certain kind of 'funerary ideology' existed in seventh-century Athens.¹⁰

There are many versions of Greek myths however. None of the images shown above conforms precisely to those known from literary sources, which are often much later than the myths to be seen on the surfaces of Greek pots. It is always possible to put forward other interpretations, and it is perhaps for this reason that most commentators have avoided detailed interpretation of the 'meaning' of the image or of the pot. Most attention has been given to the *style* of the Nessos amphora. Style was one of the principal interests of Stais and Wolters, the first to describe the pot in detail and, in so doing, admit it to the canon of Greek Art.¹¹ This status was confirmed, and its role in the history of Greek art carefully defined, by a number of later scholars, principally J.D. Beazley. By style is meant two things: the overall manner and technique of drawing and painting; and the individual style of the painter, that which distinguishes his hand from that of others. For Beazley, 'black-figure' is a technique where figures in black are drawn on a clay ground, their features being outlined by incision. It was Beazley who grouped this pot with others he believed to be by the same painter, a painter called (by other scholars) after this vase, the 'Nessos painter'.¹² In Beazley's eyes its significance is twofold: it exemplifies the style of a particular individual; and it comes to play a pivotal role in the development of Greek art and narrative composition. For this pot is pregnant with as yet unrealised possibilities. As Beazley put it:

¹⁰ For this interpretation, see Osborne 1988: 1–6; for criticisms see Whitley 1994a: 63–5. For the publication of the pot, see Mylonas 1957. For the latest discussion of this image, see Snodgrass 1998: 90–100. ¹¹ Stais and Wolters 1891.

¹² Beazley 1944, 1956: 4–5. Beazley actually attributes this pot to the 'Nettos [sic] and Chimaera painter'. Most other scholars, while agreeing with Beazley's attributions, have preferred to use the term the 'Nessos painter'; see Boardman 1974: 15.

At the end of the seventh century, the black-figure takes the place of the outline technique in Attica: the exuberant ornament is reduced, the animals are powerfully stylized; the eccentricity disappears. The change is partly due to influence from proto-corinthian art. The chief example of this stage is the Nessos amphora in Athens, where the group of Herakles and the Centaur yields to fine proto-corinthian work in deftness, surpasses it in force. Other works by the same painter have been preserved: he is perhaps the earliest Greek artist whose *personality* we can grasp [emphasis mine].¹³

After Beazley, unanimity descends upon British Classical archaeologists. For Robert Cook, the style of fig. 1.1 is 'carefully chosen and admirably executed' and 'Attic art has gained in compactness and unity, and in subtlety too';¹⁴ for Martin Robertson, the vase shows that 'patterns of form and meaning are beginning to crystallise, which keep their character through the archaic age and beyond'.¹⁵ American commentators too have tended to follow Beazley's lead; for Hurwit, this pot shows that 'after a period of idiosyncrasy, experiment and whim, Athenian image making is once more subjected to the rigors of schema and type'.¹⁶

There seem to be a number of features common to all of these accounts, chief amongst which is a tendency to round off an empirical description with a kind of abstract, almost metaphysical claim. My argument in this chapter is that Greek archaeology, at least as it has traditionally been practised up until the early 1970s, is characterised by certain commonalities in the description of its preferred objects. If so, similar features may also be evident in the commentary on another example of Greek art I want to examine, the Delphi Charioteer (fig. 1.2). This can be seen today in the museum of Delphi, close to where it was found by French excavators in 1896. It is one of the few original bronze statues we possess, cast in several pieces by a version of the lost wax method.¹⁷ It was discovered just to the north-west of the temple of Apollo itself, where it had been buried in rockfall.¹⁸ The statue was almost immediately recognised as being part of a bronze chariot group of a kind described by the Greek travel writer Pausanias, who wrote a sort of 'Guide to Greece' in the second century BC.¹⁹ Two inscriptions were found in close association. One, found much closer than the other to the statue itself, reads in part '*P*olyzalos *m'anethek[e]*', Polyzalos dedicated me; the other, less clearly

¹³ Beazley and Ashmole 1932: 11. I have presumed here that the style of writing indicates Beazley's rather than Ashmole's 'scholarly personality'. ¹⁴ Cook 1972: 71. ¹⁵ Robertson 1975: 54–5.

¹⁶ Hurwit 1985: 178.

¹⁷ For its technique, see Mattusch 1988: 4, 126–35. The lost wax method is the one most widely used by Greek craftsmen when making large, hollow statues in bronze. It requires first a clay model to be made, over which the features of the statue are modelled in wax. A clay covering is placed over the whole, and, when the molten bronze is poured in, the wax melts away, and, as the molten bronze cools, it takes on the wax's shape.

¹⁸ For the circumstances of its discovery, see Chamoux 1955: 7.

¹⁹ See for example Pausanias X.13.5; X.10.3. Neither of the chariots so described is a dedication after a victory in the chariot race. They are rather dedications of bronze chariot groups erected after military victories, and the subjects are legendary heroes rather than contemporary figures. Pausanias, in his description of Delphi, for the most part disdains to list all the athletic victors' statues, as he had done for Olympia.



1.2 Delphi Charioteer

associated, gives the name of a sculptor, Sotades.²⁰ The historical record of the time tells us of a certain Polyzalos who may plausibly be associated with this statue (Diodoros [Diodorus Siculus] XI.48.3–6, 8). He was one of the sons of Deinomenes who was, for a time, tyrant of Gela in Sicily. The inscriptions and the context allow us to say with some certainty what the sculpture was for: it was a monument intended both to commemorate Polyzalos' victory in the chariot race in the Pythian games and, simultaneously, to stand as a thank offering to the god Apollo. Since we know when Polyzalos and the sons of Deinomenes held power in Sicily, and since we know that the Pythian games were held every four

²⁰ For the inscriptions, see Chamoux 1955: 26–31 and 19 fig. 1. The inscription is, in fact, a bit more complicated than this. There seems to have been an erasure, and it is only the second inscription that mentions Polyzalos. An earlier inscription seems to mention Gela. See discussion by Jeffery 1990: 266, 275 no. 9 and plate 51. Like most inscriptions, it is far from complete, and there is no interpretation without some degree of restoration.

years, the statue can be dated, with some precision, to just after 478, 474 or 470 BC.²¹ Soon after its discovery it was proclaimed a masterpiece of Greek art, a supreme example of the early Classical or Severe style in Greek sculpture. French archaeologists were particularly proud of their find. J. Charbonneau exclaims, 'Before the Charioteer, one cannot but feel the presence of genius, asserting itself both in the overall conception and in the inventive multiplicity of detail' and goes on to encapsulate the essence of the work: 'Everything in the figure of the Charioteer simultaneously suggests immobility and movement, rhythm and symmetry, life and design.'²² British scholars have often (though not always) agreed with this estimation. At the end of a long description, Martin Robertson boldly states that the Charioteer has 'architectural strength and simplicity, but infused with life'.²³

As with the Nessos amphora, there is a distinct tendency for scholars to describe works in terms of abstract qualities which transcend that object's original function or purpose; as too with the Nessos amphora, there is an urge to search for a personality, the painter behind the pot and the sculptor behind the bronze.²⁴ Some commentators, who have a wider interest in cultural history, have been more ambitious. At least one has tried to relate the abstract principles they discern in this work to ideas current at the time of its creation. Here J.J. Pollitt attempts to discern the ethos (the 'character') within the Delphi Charioteer: 'Not only does it celebrate, like the Pythian odes [of Pindar], a victory won at the festival games, but the ethos which it conveys is a manifestation of Pindaric *arete* . . . the "innate excellence" of noble natures which gives them proficiency and pride in their human endeavors before the gods.' Pollitt goes on to describe the abstract qualities which both inhere in the work, and which sum up for him the spirit of the age: 'In the Charioteer we are confronted with a definable ethos which is neither aloof, as the High Classical period will often be, nor remote and neutral like the Archaic, but rather, like the early Classical era, simultaneously proud and vulnerable.'²⁵

This is not the place to dispute the interpretations, nor to question the judgement of these writers. Whether or not either of these objects is a work of art (and what we may understand by this term); whether they possess qualities which transcend the original purposes for which they were made and the contexts in which they were used; these are, strictly speaking, not archaeological questions at all, but questions of an art-historical or even philosophical kind. But Pollitt's remarks do raise other important issues, issues which archaeologists and

²¹ For a discussion of the sons of Deinomenes (the Deinomenidai) see Barrett 1973. For a recent attempt to place the Charioteer more firmly in its historical context (and a reconsideration of the date), see Rolley 1990. ²² Charbonneau *et al.* 1972: 106.

²³ Robertson 1975: 189. Other English-speaking scholars have however been far less complimentary; see Stewart 1990: 149; Boardman 1985a: 52.

²⁴ For attempts to identify the sculptor of the Charioteer, see Chamoux 1955: 74–5; Robertson 1975: 189. Ridgway (1970: 34) however makes no real attempt at attribution, content to see the sculpture as a good example of the style (and spirit) of the age. ²⁵ Pollitt 1972: 48.

historians have to address. It has often been said that Classical Archaeology differs from prehistoric and other archaeologies because it is historical, and that the art and material culture of ancient Greece must be understood primarily in a literary context. In the case of the Nessos amphora, all that the literary context can provide is the means of recognising the myth depicted; it cannot, in and of itself, produce an interpretation of the images that are shown. With the Delphi Charioteer on the other hand, Pollitt's ambition to link the art with the literature of the period may seem more reasonable. For we can identify the dedicator, and so place the object in its historical context. Direct historical context is however not Pollitt's principal concern. His interest lies rather in the sense conveyed by two words – *ethos* and *arete*. *Ethos* is a term used in discussions of art in Greek literature from the fourth century onwards. There is no positive evidence that it was used in this way in the first quarter of the fifth. With *arete* Pollitt is on firmer ground. *Arete* is a word much used by the poets Pindar and Bacchylides, who were very much this sculpture's contemporaries. Pollitt's suggestion that chariot groups like the Delphi Charioteer were analogies, in bronze, to the epinician odes composed and sung to celebrate some famous athletic victory is an attractive one. Here art and literature do genuinely illuminate one another, and contribute to a broader cultural history. But this approach does have its limitations. Cultural history of this kind can be written from works such as this one which we can date with some precision, and whose context is of a kind described in our ancient sources (in this case Pausanias). But the vast majority of objects even from such a well-documented period as the fifth century do not have accompanying inscriptions that are quite so helpful; nor do they come from sites which are quite so well known; nor can their purpose be so easily compared to that of a literary genre. That species of cultural history that turns itself into an elevated conversation between high art and high literature is necessarily limited in scope. Cultural history of this kind must perforce restrict itself to a narrow range of well-known objects, a small canon of great works.

But it is exactly the description, discussion and reinterpretation of such objects which has, in the past, been the traditional subject of Classical Archaeology. Such an archaeology necessarily puts objects before contexts, and prefers personalities to technique. Such an archaeology has rarely, if ever, seen its task as being one of providing a worm's eye view of the 'banalistic' (that is commonplace, or 'common') realities of Greek life. Historical or anthropological knowledge of a comparative kind has not been its primary objective. Rather the archaeology of ancient Greece, like Classical studies in general, has seen its role as one of celebration as much as of study. The numerous books cited above are, in a sense, so many epinician (victory) odes to the enduring appeal of Classical art, and to the values that art represents. The task of Classical Archaeology has been one of a custodian of traditional values, of what the European aristocratic societies of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries most prized in ancient Greece.

1.2 The objects of Classical Archaeology

It is for all these reasons that the material, archaeological and artistic record of Greece cannot simply be viewed as just another body of material, material which can be studied according to the same principles and using the same methods that have been used in any other part of the world. Or rather, the Greek archaeological sequence may in fact be no different to the unprejudiced Asian or African eye, but it has not been treated as such by the vast majority of European, North American and Australian scholars. The material record of Greece reaches the modern student with a whole series of values attached. Hence the significance of the word 'Classical'. The archaeology of Greece in this period is not simply archaeology – it is Classical Archaeology. The term 'Classical Archaeology' does not merely indicate the archaeology of the so-called Classical period in Greece (479–323 BC). Objects from the Archaic and Hellenistic periods have traditionally enjoyed a status similar to those from the Classical. There is more Art in Classical Archaeology than in other archaeologies, and that Art has been more highly regarded than art from other times and places. The objects of Classical Archaeology have assumed canonical status, and this status has had a kind of 'trickle down' effect on the material record of Greece as a whole. All objects from Greece, however humble (such as terracottas), are in the eyes of many scholars considered 'Classical'.

The Classical Archaeology of Greece has thus had very different objects from other archaeologies – and I mean objects in both senses of the word. Classical Archaeology has been not merely the study of a different class of objects (or objects of a different class, one might say). It has also had a quite different set of objectives. Again, it is not simply that Classical Archaeology is the study of an historical period, and that its practitioners are thus more reliant on (and familiar with) texts than prehistorians; or that Classical archaeologists have a strong liking for art-historical modes of expression. It is rather that the practice of archaeology in Greece has been closely tied to the study of the Classics, with all that that fact implies. Not so long ago, the Classics played a central role in the elite education of most Western countries. All prestigious universities had Classics departments, and new and aspiring universities sought to acquire them. The Classics, as a university subject, was chiefly the study of the language, literature, history and philosophy of the Greek and Latin speaking world in Antiquity. Teachers of Classics were also much concerned with the transmission of the values contained within ancient literature and philosophy to future generations. Archaeologists of ancient Greece could enjoy a similar (if slightly lower) status to their literary colleagues if they could prove their philological credentials. Archaeologists were also concerned to show that the study of the material record of the ancient world, and especially of its art, had a role to play in the transmission of Classical values. Art, like poetry and philosophy, could be, in the words of the Latin poet Horace, a *monumentum aere perennius*, a monument

more lasting than bronze. The values which Classical art embodied transcended its mere physical presence.

But the status of the Classics as a subject is not what it was. In Britain there are more departments of archaeology than there are of Classics, and in the United States archaeologists in anthropology departments considerably outnumber those attached to departments of Classics. Nor do the values which 'the Classics' were once held to represent enjoy the cultural authority they once did. The question that seems most urgent now is not, perhaps, can something as 'banausic' as archaeology be Classical, but is Classical Archaeology archaeology at all? It may be helpful (at least rhetorically) to consider Greek archaeology from an outsider's point of view – in fact from the point of view of a prehistorian.

1.3 Childe and Beazley: a conflict of paradigms

Many prehistorians dislike Classical Archaeology. It is not simply that they exhibit a perfectly understandable preference for their own area of prehistory; nor that they have a well-developed aesthetic preference for the rough-hewn, the rude and the primitive; nor even that there may be some lingering resentment of the prestige that Classical Archaeology once enjoyed. Many prehistorians (at least many who work in Britain) simply do not see the point of Classical Archaeology. From these prehistorians' point of view, Classical Archaeology is not archaeology at all but a rarefied and dilettantish pursuit, whose connexions to the art market are rather too close for comfort. This attitude is not new, as a brief historical excursus should show.

V. Gordon Childe was one of this century's most distinguished prehistorians. He is responsible for some of the most influential syntheses of European and Near Eastern prehistory ever written, and remains a major influence on the course of archaeology's intellectual development. It is not often remembered that he was first educated at Oxford as a classicist, and then, for a time, as a Classical archaeologist. He was in fact taught by J.D. Beazley, but his experience as a pupil was (in later recollection at least) not a happy one. Childe was bemused as to why bronzes, terracottas and painted pottery should be 'respectable', whereas stone and bronze tools were 'banausic'.²⁶ Childe devoted much of his life to the idea of the unity of archaeology, in the belief that archaeology was a universal science of humankind whose aims and methods were everywhere the same. Nowhere was his advocacy more passionate than in a paper he delivered in 1943. Childe did not, like many contemporary prehistorians, simply ignore Classical Archaeology. Rather he chided classicists for their myopia, and gave no quarter to his old teacher Beazley: 'It is absurd that students should be trained to distinguish between the several masters of Attic vase-painting and the different schools of sculpture, but given no inkling of even the typological significance of unpainted wares, safety-pins

²⁶ Childe 1958: 69.

[fibulae] and swords.²⁷ This paper was delivered at a conference in London on the 'Future of Archaeology'. This conference can now be seen, in retrospect, as one of the most important occasions for the setting of intellectual agendas in archaeology in the twentieth century. It defined British (and, to a large extent, North American and Australian) ambitions for a World Archaeology, a science of Everyman Everywhere. It explicitly rejected a German philological model of a pre-history of peoples and nations, which had been tainted by Nazism. It outlined a new rationale for this project, which others later called 'ethnographic humanism'.²⁸ Such humanism was based on a concept of humankind derived from ethnographic observation and anthropological theory. A humanism so defined was necessarily distinct from the earlier kind, which Western thought had inherited from the Renaissance, and which placed a particular value on the Western inheritance from the Classical World. As such, ethnographic humanism was a direct challenge to the authority of the Classics. The 'World Archaeology Project' that this conference inaugurated was, for the next thirty years at least, undoubtedly a success. Its rationale underpinned major comparative projects in the study of the social and political evolution of Mesoamerica and Mesopotamia; it breathed fresh life into European prehistory; it justified the extension of archaeological interest into every corner of the globe; and the extraordinary series of discoveries relating to early hominid evolution were, in no small part, the result of its ambition.

J.D. Beazley was present at this conference. Together with J.L. Myres, he represented Greek and Roman archaeology. Myres clearly appreciated the conference's importance, and understood its implicit agenda. He pointed out that, if British archaeologists were to engage in fieldwork across the globe, they should display a greater understanding of local sensitivities than they had in the past. How would British scholars react, he argued, if the (admittedly hypothetical) 'Ruritanian Academy of Sciences' applied for a permit to dig Stonehenge or Offa's Dyke? Beazley by contrast limited himself to a few modest suggestions. Students of archaeology at universities should learn to draw, and learn to appreciate that much material remained in museum collections which could be studied with profit. Excavation was often as unnecessary as it was expensive.²⁹ Whatever the merits of this advice, it hardly rose to the challenge of outlining the 'Future of Archaeology'.

Childe and Beazley were both emblematic (if hardly representative) figures in twentieth-century archaeology. But, while Beazley showed absolutely no interest in prehistory, Childe was far from indifferent to the fate of Classical Archaeology. He regarded the Greek Achievement as a crucial threshold in human history, one where democracy began to replace monarchy, and reason to replace superstition. As a Marxist however Childe believed that this achievement was predicated on certain material conditions. It was these 'material conditions of life', the 'banausic' realities of the Greeks' everyday existence, as well as their art and architecture, that it

²⁷ Childe 1943: 25. Childe 1964 is the clearest articulation of the principles that informed his work.

²⁸ See in particular Clark 1943 for the clearest articulation of these ambitions, and comments by Marchand 1996: 373. ²⁹ Myres 1943; Beazley 1943.

was the archaeologist's principal task to understand. That is why, while obliquely criticising Beazley, Childe singled out the American excavators of Olynthos, a Classical city in northern Greece, for praise. Olynthos is the Skara Brae of Classical Greece.³⁰ It is a city preserved for us by its destruction by Philip of Macedon. The destruction had the effect of preserving numerous houses, houses which were laid out on a strict grid plan. The excavators, D.M. Robinson and J.W. Graham, had paid particular attention to defining the Greek Classical household, to understanding material conditions in their most fundamental sense. In recent years there has been a great revival of interest in this field.³¹ One could say that a properly 'Childean' Classical Archaeology is at last being born. The question then arises. Why has it taken so long for the potential of this avenue of research to be realised?

For the majority of Classical archaeologists have, in the post-war period at least (1945–75), largely followed Beazley rather than Childe. With some important exceptions, they have confined their interest to matters exclusively Greek or Roman, and have preferred to study art rather than look closely at the 'material conditions of life'. They want no part in 'World Archaeology'. But things could have developed otherwise. Even within the narrow compass of British Classical Archaeology, there were other currents of thought in the 1930s and 1940s. Humfry Payne, Alan Blakeway and T.J. Dunbabin all had a particular interest in what archaeology could tell us about the growth and nature of trade, and the expansion of the Greek world in the eighth and seventh centuries BC. Each of these scholars had been active in the field. Their excavations at Knossos and Eleutherna in Crete, and at the sanctuary of Perachora near Corinth, had revealed a multitude of new finds of Archaic date. But this line of enquiry was brought to an abrupt close by the premature death of all three scholars. The final publication of Payne's excavations at Perachora was left to another scholar, Martin Robertson.³²

Robertson's publication of Perachora was, in every respect, conscientious and thorough, a suitable act of piety to Dunbabin and Payne. But the virtues of Robertson's final publication are those of Beazley. Robertson displays a scrupulous attention to detail, particularly to those details which may reveal different workshops or individual craftsmen; and an engaging prose style, uncluttered by jargon. There is a clear principle in the organisation of the volume, and it is a

³⁰ See again Childe 1943, commenting on work already published by Robinson (1930; 1933a; 1933b; Robinson and Graham 1938; Robinson and Angel 1942).

Skara Brae may be unfamiliar to many readers who may have only a passing acquaintance with British prehistory. This is a Neolithic village in the Orkney islands, excavated by the British Ministry of Works under Childe's supervision in the 1930s. Since it had been covered with wind-blown sand after having been abandoned, its several stone-built houses have been remarkably well preserved. Walls, stone hearths and 'dressing tables' can all still be seen.

³¹ Robinson and Graham 1938; Robinson 1946; Mylonas 1946. Studies on houses continued in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s; see in particular Jones *et al.* 1962; 1973; Jones 1975. For recent work in this field, see Jameson 1990a; 1990b; Hoepfner and Schwandner 1994; Nevett 1999.

³² For Payne's and Blakeway's investigations in and around Knossos, see Payne 1928; Brock 1957. Payne's excavations at Eleutherna were never published, except in very preliminary form. For excavations at Perachora, see Payne 1940; Dunbabin 1962. Payne is now chiefly remembered for his ground-breaking study of Corinthian art and archaeology, *Necrocorinthia* (1931).

traditional one. Objects are listed by material and type. But just as Robertson shows he shares many of Beazley's strengths, so he exhibits the same blindspots. The historical questions that originally motivated the excavation of the site are played down. No attempt is made at a statistical analysis of the provenance or purpose of the numerous bronzes and other votives found at the site. The experience Robertson gained here nonetheless proved fundamental when he came to write his 'definitive' history of Greek art, very much in the Beazley manner.³³

It is thus a matter of more than passing interest why it is that the 'Beazleyan' paradigm prevailed over the 'Childean' in the postwar years. The period 1945–75 was, in many respects, the heyday of 'World Archaeology'. Classical archaeologists, for the most part, remained unmoved. Such indifference cannot be explained by some prescience on the part of classicists to the suspicion that many nowadays feel, in these post-colonial, post-imperial times, towards a grand, universalising project of this kind. It was, rather, an indifference born of a belief in the self-sufficiency of Classics as a discipline (and of Classical Archaeology's status within it) and of its absolute separation from prehistory. Such indifference was not however intellectually or politically astute. It was prehistorians who were to write the history books of archaeology, and in such histories Classical Archaeology (and Greece in particular) was for the most part simply left out of the picture.³⁴ Classical archaeologists were conspicuous by their absence in the major theoretical debates that took place from about 1945 to 1980. When reading general books on the history of archaeological thought, students can be forgiven for believing (wrongly) that Classical archaeologists had no ideas, or at least no ideas worth writing about. This impression has been reinforced by the fastidious habits of many Classical archaeologists, their conviction that matters of fact must be settled before matters of interpretation can begin, and their settled belief that there is no real difference between a new theory and a passing fad.

In recent years however this picture has changed out of all recognition. From the late 1970s onwards there has been an explosion of interest in a whole range of issues, issues which have a direct bearing on the 'material conditions of life' of ancient Greece. Regional studies have flourished, revealing how much various parts of Greece differed from the Classical, Athenian 'norm'. The iconography of painted pottery has been studied, not in order better to understand the 'style' of the painter or the period, but to reveal inadvertent truths about the 'mentalities' that conditioned their making. The quantitative revolution in the social sciences has arrived with a vengeance. Burials and whole cemeteries have been analysed in order to address questions of social structure and political ideology. Intensive field surveys have been undertaken all over Greece, so redressing the longstanding bias

³³ The second volume of *Perachora* has Dunbabin as the author (1962), but it was brought to publication by Martin Robertson some years after Dunbabin's death. This experience proved invaluable when Robertson came to publish his *History of Greek Art* (1975).

³⁴ As for example in Trigger 1989, where Classical Archaeology after Winckelmann is more or less ignored.

towards the study of sanctuaries and cities; and the excavators of Olynthos have been vindicated by a host of new work on urban and domestic space. In all these studies, greater emphasis has been laid on the context of the manufacture and use of objects, and less attention has been given to 'art'. A 'Childean' Classical Archaeology of Greece is at last being born.

All these innovations have not however led to a new orthodoxy within the field. Far from it. New approaches rub shoulders with old. There continues to be vigorous, often heated, debate over everything from the utility of field survey to the interpretation of the Parthenon Frieze. The vigour of these debates is in no small part due to the tenacity with which older views on the character and purpose of Classical Archaeology are held. In these (often oblique) exchanges the idea is often put forward that extraneous 'theory' should be tempered by traditional 'common sense', and that evidence should be examined free from any preconceptions or prior expectations. The supposition, however, that Classical Archaeology is (or indeed ever was) a theory-free zone is not one that I myself support. Traditional Classical Archaeology did have theories; in fact it had a complete theoretical paradigm which has justified its singular attention on objects, and its relative neglect of context, landscape and environment. This traditional theoretical paradigm has been called 'Hellenism', and for years it served Classical Archaeology perfectly well.³⁵

³⁵ For 'Hellenism' see in particular Morris 1994a. Marchand (1996) describes in detail the German genealogy of this theoretical paradigm. For other recent criticisms of the current state of Classical Archaeology in Greece, see Snodgrass 1987 and Shanks 1995.