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Art-Archaeology: The Materiality of Classical Art History

Peter Stewart

If the dull substance of my flesh were thought,
Injurious distance should not stop my way...
William Shakespeare, Sonnet XLIV, ll. 1-2.

Shakespeare may seem to provide an odd epigraph for a paper on the subject of ancient art history. But this discussion's focus is precisely that of the literary topos developed in Sonnet XLIV: the struggle and lines of resistance between 'dull substance' and thought -- between material and ideas.

In part I am concerned with the relationship between *visual culture* and the visual-cultural elements of art history on the one hand, and *material culture* and archaeology on the other. My second concern, however, is the relation between the material *subject-matter* of art history -- which is generally speaking, but not always, 'things' -- with the immaterial *medium* of language and writing through which the history of art is described. This is not a new topic, but it is one that acquires sharper definition in the study of ancient art and archaeology. I shall therefore begin with some basic observations about the challenges -- the resistance -- that material factors present to the survival and understanding of ancient art. I shall then turn to the making and dissemination of art history itself, examined from the perspective of an archaeologist.

The tension between ideas and objects is familiar to any branch of art history, but it it is nearly unavoidable in the study of ancient art. For ancient art consists almost exclusively of archaeological traces, fragments, excavated artefacts and spolia -- the flotsam and jetsam of history. Ancient art history has its origins in archaeology. Even today it scarcely exists as a discrete discipline. Internationally, those who study classical art are often simply called classical archaeologists. On the other hand, increasingly perhaps, there have been scholars who approach Greek and Roman art in a much less obviously archaeological manner: for example, those who adopt approaches informed by post-structuralist literary criticism and who concentrate on visuality or visual communication more than materiality.[1] An inherent tension exists in

[1] This is a development in which the Courtauld Institute of Art had a significant role in the 1990s, particularly through the work and teaching of Dr Jas Elsner. For post-structuralist and 'literary' approaches to classical art see e.g.: S. Goldhill and R. Osborne (eds.), *Art and Text in Ancient Greek Culture* (Cambridge, 1994), with critical discussion in J. Tanner, 'Shifting Paradigms in Classical Art History', *Antiquity* 68 (1994), 650-5; J. Elsner (ed.), *Art and Text in Roman Culture* (Cambridge, 1996); J. Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer* (Cambridge, 1997); idem, *Roman Eyes: Visuality and Subjectivity in Art and Text* (Princeton, 2007).

the discipline itself, to which we shall shortly return. The differing emphasis placed by different scholarly traditions on the physical versus the visual -- material culture as opposed to visual culture -- can be discerned from the kind of research and teaching conducted in different university departments in which classical art is studied. Moreover, in the UK and North America, for example, those departments may be, variously, departments of art history, archaeology, or classics. In reality, ancient art is both things: visual and material culture. The friction between these two characters of ancient art -- the one rooted in the patterning of physical remains, the other in shared understandings of imagery -- provides one of the most interesting and stimulating aspects of ancient art, whichever we choose to emphasise.

This sort of tension is latent in surprising places. For example, notwithstanding Shakespeare's complaint, it is clear that even literature is a form of material culture.[2] Because of our particular preference for literature's immaterial, disembodied virtues, we tend to neglect its material dimensions and efface the mechanisms by which it is distributed. But even Shakespeare's work has been transmitted on the page (or on the screen), having had a tenuous paper existence before the printing of the first folio around 1623. Printed texts are made, moved, sold, bought, and burnt. This is to say nothing of the material circumstances of a text's reception or performance -- the infrastructure of knowledge.[3] As Robert Smith first observed in the 1930s - the Bodleian Library's First Folio of Shakespeare's works was literally worn away at those pages containing *Romeo and Juliet* -- and especially the balcony scene -- a material trace of the romantic sensibilities of seventeenth-century Oxford undergraduates.[4] And then of course there are the more precarious works of literature -- those that exist only in manuscript. For example, the text of Menander's Hellenistic Greek comedy, the *Dyskolos*, was recovered from the sands of Egypt and first printed only in 1958, some 2,275 years after it was written.[5] No papyrologist would doubt that literature is material culture.

Two kinds of disciplinary tension therefore form the subject of this paper: on the one hand, the resistance to interpretation posed by material factors; and on the other hand, the extent to which those constraints are recognized or ignored in our study of ancient culture. Let us begin, however, with some very basic observations about the character of classical art as we encounter it. We shall look in turn at the survival and loss of antiquity; the role of ancient artists; and the dissemination of imagery. Finally the discussion will return to the historiography of art.

The inheritance of loss

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[2] Generally on the material history of texts, see D. Pearson, *Books as History: The Importance of Books Beyond their Texts* (2nd edn., New Castle, DE and London, 2011).

[3] Cf. generally D. Pearson, *Books as History: The Importance of Books Beyond their Texts* (London, 2008).

[4] R.M. Smith, 'Why a First Folio Shakespeare Remained in England', *Review of English Studies* 15 (1939), 257-64, at 258.

[5] V. Martin, *Le Dyscolos (Papyrus Bodmer IV)* (Geneva, 1958).

C.W. Ceram has made famous a story originally told by the Italian antiquary and writer Augusto Jandolo, which is as emblematic of our relationship with antiquity as it is, doubtless, unreliable.[6] Jandolo recounts an incident from his childhood, some time around the 1880s, when he was helping his father to open an ancient Etruscan sarcophagus. When the lid was clumsily removed, Jandolo writes,

> something happened that I have never forgotten and that will remain before my eyes as long as I live. I saw resting within the coffin the body of a young warrior in full military panoply, with helmet, spear, shield, and greaves. Observe that it was not a skeleton that I saw, but a body , complete in all limbs, and stiffly outstretched as if freshly laid in the grave. This apparition endured but a moment. Then everything seemed to dissolve in the light of the torches. The helmet rolled to the right, the round shield fell into the now sunken breast-piece of the armor, and the greaves suddenly collapsed flat on the ground, one to the right, one to the left. The body that had remained untouched for centuries had suddenly dissolved into dust when exposed to the air... a golden dust was suspended in the air and about the flame of the torches.

One lesson of the story is that, all things being equal, things survive. That is why in reality we occasionally have glimpses of an implausibly intact antiquity -- apparitions like Jandolo's: in the form of Egyptian mummies; Tutankhamun's antechamber stacked up like a recently locked lumber room; or the charred furnishings of life in the Campanian towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum.

But the appeal of these cases is that they are *not* typical. All things are not equal. When it comes to ancient art-objects, almost everything ever made was either perishable, or invited destruction. Leaving aside buildings, a mere handful of Greek and Roman works of art have never been beneath the ground -- a few sculptures such as the Capitoline Wolf and the other classical bronzes made famous in medieval Rome; some gems and cameos, including magnificent specimens like the Vienna Cameo of the Ptolemies, which can be documented back to the thirteenth century and was probably in the treasuries of Byzantine and Roman emperors before that.[7] Otherwise, most of the material of classical art history comes from the ground, in which wood and textile rot and iron rusts. Over the centuries bronze sculptures have been melted as scrap metal, and marble and limestone have been burnt in kilns to make mortar.

As the Menander papyrus reminds us, the same is true of art-historical *documentation*. Egypt aside, the texts that we have from classical antiquity are generally those that were inscribed on stone or deemed suitable for preservation by medieval copyists. So for the most part we lack artists' contracts, accounts, biographies, and indeed names.

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[6] A. Jandolo, *Le memorie di un antiquario* (Milan, 1935). See also C.W. Ceram, *Gods, Graves and Scholars* (London, 1967), 18.

[7] See E. Zwierlein-Diehl, *Die Gemmen und Kameen des Dreikönigenschreines* (1998); C.M. Brown, *Engaved Gems: Survivals and Revivals* (Washington DC, 1997), which includes discussion of the confusions around the Vienna Cameo and the so-called Gonzaga Cameo in St Petersburg.

The result is that the art history of classical antiquity -- much more that that of any other period in western art -- involves a process of reconstruction out of a non-representative selection of what once existed. Later periods of art history must select what to study on the basis of assumptions, whether articulated or not, about what is good enough or interesting enough to be worth looking at, or what counts as art. Classical art history has its parameters set by the accidents of survival.

This is not necessarily a bad thing, though we dare not often admit to the suspicion. To put it crudely, most of the *fun* in studying classical art lies in speculating about things that we do not know, and maybe never shall. Sporadic new discoveries add to the pleasure, but if we were suddenly able to recover ancient art in any quantity, how would we cope?

Classical archaeology certainly does not have a good record in dealing with the more extraordinary survivals of antiquities when they do occur. Pompeii is a case in point. Visitors to Pompeii are sometimes disappointed by the exposed rubble walls that they see there when they come expecting to find beautiful frescoes. The fact is that most of the paintings ever found at Pompeii since excavations began in 1758, have now been destroyed or severely damaged -- destroyed, that is, *after* excavation. In the early decades the Bourbon excavators of the Campanian sites, for whose employers the discoveries were a form of cultural capital, systematically and intentionally destroyed those parts of the figurative painting they did not want at sites such as the Villa of Ariadne near Castellammare di Stabia (ancient Stabiae).[8] More than three centuries later, problems of conservation and planning have dogged even enlightened, modern excavations of the Campania sites, as when the 1990s re-excavations of the Villa of the Papyri at Herculaneum ended amidst recriminations between the Archaeological Superintendency and the contractor, as the freshly uncovered antiquities were neglected and rapidly decayed.[9]

Nevertheless, the challenges posed by unusually extensive survivals seldom arise, since most Greek and Roman art has long since vanished for good. To give just one indication of the scale of loss: we know from ancient literature that from the fifth century BC through the Roman Empire, the Greeks and Roman especially admired and displayed fine paintings on wooden panels ('easel paintings'). Yet not a single easel painting of this kind survives from classical antiquity, and all the extant paintings on wood outside Egypt (where the desert climate aids preservation) could probably be counted on the fingers of one hand. This lack of ancient paintings famously stimulated artists of the Renaissance and early modern periods to attempt imaginative reinventions of lost masterpieces attested by classical authors. Thus versions of the 'Calumny' by Apelles -- a lost Greek work described by the second-century writer Lucian -- were created by Botticelli, Mantegna, and others.[10]

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[8] On the practice see C. Parlsow, *Rediscovering Antiquity: Karl Weber and the Excavation of Herculaneum, Pompeii, and Stabiae* (Cambridge, 1998), 207-8.
[9] See e.g. *The Independent* (London), 12 August, 2002 [http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/roman-villa-rots-while-recriminations-fly-over-restoration-639644.html (accessed 9/10/12)]
[10] J.M. Massing, *Du texte à l'image: la Calomnie d'Apelle et son iconographie* (Strasbourg, 1990). On ancient painting and its legacy see S. Lydakis, *Ancient Greek Painting and its Echoes in Later Art* (Los Angeles, 2004).

The allure of the lost artist

Perhaps the best indication of this inheritance of loss is provided by the fate of ancient artists. In modern art history, recent decades have of course seen attempts to kill off the 'great artist' as a meaningful agent in the production of art, and although she or he has been well and truly resussitated by now, it has not been without considerable philosophical discussion and self-examination.[11] On this issue (as on others), classical archaeology has managed to outflank the last forty years of critical theory, for the simple reason that the evidence severely constrains our choices about how to approach ancient art.[12] To put it crudely, we never had any great artists to begin with.

We have their *names*, certainly. Despite the fact that most ancient artists were socially inferior, often poor, and regarded as tradesmen, they could become very successful, sometimes acclaimed for the prestige of their work. Certain artists of classical Greece were effectively canonized as special characters in the story of art. The Romans respected famous sculptors and painters from their Hellenic cultural past. It is above all in Pliny the Elder's encyclopedia of *Natural History* that we hear about their achievements, but elsewhere as well, and Pliny draws upon a tradition of lost writing from the Hellenistic period, which is when art history writing was invented to begin with. The ancient anecdotes about these artists provided the paradigm for Vasari and later biographers.[13]

And so we have, for instance, Pheidias -- a Michelangelo of the fifth century BC -- who made the giant gold and ivory cult-statues in the Parthenon and the Temple of Zeus at Olympia. We have Myron, the maker of the Diskobolos (discus-thrower) known from Roman copies. We have the names of Polykleitos and Praxiteles. Lysippos and Skopas. And we have painters: Apelles, Polygnotos, Parrhasios, for example. There are further names that regularly recur in Roman references to the history of art, to the extent that they acquire almost proverbial status. Yet of all these famous names, not one single original work survives that can be attributed with any confidence. The loss is all the more tantalizing for the oblique traces that do sometimes exist: Praxiteles's 'signature' on an unoccupied statue-base; the inscription 'I belong to Pheidias' scratched on a mug from the site of his workshop at Olympia; the foundations of galleries in Rome where (as the sources tell us) plundered Greek masterpieces of sculpture and painting were once exhibited.

The frustration caused by the scanty evidence coupled with the allure of the individual talent have sometimes tempted classical archaeologists to generate artistic personalities out of what little we have, whether by elaborating on textual sources, extrapolating from supposed Roman copies of much earlier lost works, or by focusing on better attested media (notably by elevating the usually anonymous artists who

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[11] On the 'death' and survival of the author/artist see e.g. H. Johnson, 'The Survival of the Author', *Literature and Aesthetics* 6 (1996), 79-90.

[12] Cf. N. Spivey, *Understanding Greek Sculpture: Ancient Readings, Modern Meanings* (London, 1996), 14-15.

[13] On these issues, with further references, see P. Stewart, 'Classical Artists and Texts: Loss and Re-Creation', in H. Hurst and S. Owen, *Archaeology and Written Evidence* (forthcoming).

painted Athenian pots in the sixth to fifth centuries BC). There is an understandable but dangerous craving for discoveries of master-sculptors' actual works whenever news emerges of a newly discovered Greek 'original'. The tendency is particularly noticable with finds of bronze sculptures, which are periodically netted on the floor of the Mediterranean, for bronzes have an aura of authenticity. The inaccurate but deeply embedded assumption is that the Romans made inferior marble copies (and only marble copies) of classical Greek originals conceived in metal.

The famous Riace warriors, discovered off the coast of Calabria in 1972 are the most celebrated example of the phenomenon. They are of undoubted technical and artistic quality, and it may seem reasonable in theory to attempt their attribution to one of the great sculptures of the mid-fifth century BC who are attested in the ancient literature. But when we observe that over the years scholars have attributed them variously to Myron, Onatas, Pheidias, Polykleitos, and other craftsmen, it becomes clear that the exercise is doomed in practice.[14]

Similar cases arise periodically. In 1998 an extraordinary dancing satyr was found off the south-west coast of Sicily at Mazara del Vallo. Inevitably many attributed it to Praxiteles, including Professor Bernard Andreae, former director of the German Archaeological Institute in Rome. But fundamentally the attribution was underpinned by little more than an approximate suitability of style.[15] Similarly, when in 2004 the Cleveland Museum controversially purchased a bronze statue in the form of Praxiteles's Lizard-Killer, the *Apollo Sauroktonos* known from ancient references and Roman copies, a series of scholars declared that it must be *the* original work, or at least *an* original from Praxiteles's workshop.[16] The claim was sustained purely by wishfully thinking and a conviction that quality must equate to originality. In reality the statue is likely to be a Hellenistic or Roman replica of Praxiteles's type.

It must be noted that the desire to associate such rare survivals with the names of famous artists, is not entirely unsound. These are indeed very fine works. Moreover, the fact that they come from the sea suggests that they were lost in storms while in transit during the Roman period, so it is easy to imagine that they were being carried as booty, or at least that they were being traded as fine art marketed at Roman aristocratic customers. Nevertheless, the confidence of the claims is ill-founded. Such

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[14] Overview and references in N. Spivey, *op. cit.*, 134-136, 219.

[15] B. Andreae, *Der tanzende Satyr von Mazara del Vallo und Praxiteles* (Stuttgart, 2009). Note also various contributions by P. Moreno, as summarized by Moreno, with full bibliography, at: http://www.paolomoreno.com/SEZIONI%20SITO/Passato%20presente.htm [last consulted 5/5/14].

[16] M. Bennett, 'Une nouvelle réplique de l'Apollon Sauroctone au musée de Cleveland', 206-8. Cleveland Museum of Art news release, 22nd June, 2004 (http://www.clevelandart.org/exhibcef/apollo/html/9101537.html [last consulted 6/9/12]). General discussion in *The Plain Dealer* (Cleveland newspaper), 12th September, 2004 (http://www.cleveland.com/apollo/plaindealer/index.ssf?/apollo/more/1094986500196300.html [last consulted 6/9/2012]); 16th February, 2008 (http://www.cleveland.com/arts/index.ssf/2008/02/god_of_mystery_gaps_in_apollo.html [last consulted 6/9/12]); and passim.

assumptions are typical of the kind of positivism bred not only by the convergent psychology of the sort of people who study classical archaeology -- as Anthony Snodgrass has described[17] -- but by the painful desire to compensate for partial evidence.

The fascination with artists and tangible, surviving masterpieces is, however, only one narrow aspect of classical archaeology, and it is rather deceptive to dwell on it. Traditionally classical archaeologists have been not nearly so much preoccupied with individual artists and their innovations, or with the personal styles of artists, as with broad trends, such as the styles of periods or regions, and with typological structures for the classification of anonymous artefacts.

Classical art history and archaeology are, by definition, concerned with abstracting from all the variety and complexity of ancient Greek and Roman art, fundamental recurring principles and traits: the features that make classical art *classical*. This is not simply a matter of imposing on ancient evidence classifications and stylistic labels that are invented by archaeologists. The genetic traits of Graeco-Roman art did exist in such a way as to transcend material obstacles.

Ultimately, classical styles and iconography came to be diffused across the entire territory of the Roman empire and beyond, so that Graeco-Roman imagery, Graeco-Roman poses and dress, and particular naturalistic techniques for portraying them, can be detected as far as apart as Portugal and Pakistan, Scotland and Egypt. The material circumstances of their production are utterly different in the vastly varying locations and periods concerned, but the classical stamp of these works is evident to the attuned eye of the classicist. The processes of diffusion of classical artistic culture are infinitely complex: but the family resemblance among artefacts in the classical tradition is clear.

Because of the difficulty of determining the local circumstances, authorship, date, etc. of any object in isolation, especially where no archaeological context is known, and because of the insistent repetitions that occur in the classical tradition, classical archaeology has depended heavily on abstract typologies, analogies, and schemata in order to situate excavated objects. Naturally these schemata belie the complexity of material culture on the ground. The consequence of this procedure is an interesting conceptual tension in the study of Greek and Roman art: a tension between a generalizing classical material or visual *culture* on the one hand, and on the other hand the specificity of the excavated object.

So determined is classical archaeology to categorise and classify objects, that it has often struggled, and sometimes still struggles, to deal with the pluralism of a material culture at any one moment in time. The difficulty is not purely one of methodology: it is a real challenge posed by the material, which is often undatable by any other means than stylistic comparison.

So it is (so give just two examples) that archaic Greek statues in the sixth and early fifth centuries BC, for which few absolute dates exist, are regularly placed in a

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[17] A. Snodgrass, *An Archaeology of Greece: The Present State and Future Scope of the Discipline* (Berkeley and London, 1987).

relatively chronology according to the degree of naturalism that they exhibit. Like illustrations of the ascent of man, the male figures called *kouroi* are used to trace the incremental development of classical anatomy arising from the 'Greek Revolution' in art. The picture is plausible, and there no preferable way of placing the sculptures in a chronology. Yet there is no reason to assume that the development was as consistent or clear as the picture implies. Similarly when we reach relatively safe chronological ground with the construction of the Parthenon in Athens (*c*. 447-432 BC) the weakness of relative chronologies based on style becomes demonstrable, for a manifest pluralism exists among sculptures of the Parthenon, most conspicuously in the metopes. Evidentally a variety of artists worked side by side, sculpting in differing traditions; some works appears more 'archaic', others more 'classical' and naturalistic. If they lacked a context, the stylistic typologies of the archaeologists would separate them by perhaps ten or twenty years.[18]

One area where this kind of dislocation is recognized, even in the most abstract archaeological schemata, is in the dating of archaic Greek pottery. If we look for the distinctive features of the so-called Late Geometric style in pottery, we find them occurring at different periods in different places. This decorative style is used to date a phase in the development of Greek art and archaeology. We talk about the 'Geometric Period' and 'Geometric Greece'. Yet as far as we can determine from the correlation of different archaeological evidence, this particular 'culture', as defined by the style of objects, may start variously between 760 and 720 BC, and ends around 700, or 720, or 690, or 680, or later, depending on whether one is looking at pottery production in Athens, Corinth, Argos, or the East Greek cities. It is therefore a primarily archaeological culture, rather than an historical one. In one sense the 'archaeological' perspective is the more interesting, if we could only understand its historical correlatives more fully, precisely because of the different rates at which styles of artefact (different 'fashions' perhaps) were adopted in different places. But the archaeological sequences on which we necessarily rely have a flattening effect on the historical texture of stylistic change. This is a fundamental observation for many different kinds of archaeology, which has tended in the past to *define* cultures by the formal patterning of their material traces.

From the materiality of ancient art to the materiality of art history

The discussion so far has consisted of selective observations about the material circumstances that constrain our knowledge of and approach to ancient art (we might say 'archaeological art'): the scale of loss involved; the tension between observation of specific artefacts and generalizing classifications in classical art; the distorting effects of typologies, which compensate for the loss of specific information. I now want to change direction, turning from the materiality of classical art, to the materiality of art history. This is a change of subject, but the analogies with what is discussed above should be clear. In what follows, I focus on classical art history, but the observations ought to apply more widely to scholarship in other periods of art history and the humanities in general.

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[18] Such an assumption informed Rhys Carpenter's elaborately tenuous argument that the Parthenon reused material intended for a previous 'Cimonian' Parthenon twenty years previously: *The Architects of the Parthenon* (Baltimore, 1970).

So what are the material circumstances for the communication of art history? What are the *objects* of art history? The most obvious material medium in the discourse of classical art history -- of any art history -- is the printed publication. It is convenient for us to assume that this is the main medium for the transmission of ideas and knowledge in the sphere of higher education and research. Up to a point, this is demonstrably true. Lecturers set reading lists for students, which inform the students' own work. Those who do research rely largely -- sometimes overwhelmingly -- not on direct encounters with works of art but on published discussions, catalogues, and printed illustrations.

Yet anyone who has been involved in publication recognizes the precariousness of the medium, with its spatial and material constraints. Most people think of books as disseminating ideas across the world, and so they do. But typically an academic monograph will be embodied in a total of, say, 500 printed copies, most of which, on account of their production costs and specialist appeal, will be aimed at university libraries. A scholarly journal in the humanities may have rather more hard copies printed and distributed, but the individual articles will generally receive still less attention. The online availability of articles now allows publishers to gauge the reception of these articles, so that one can establish that some are indeed relatively popular and -- to use a term with current resonance -- impactful, while others are hardly read at all.

It would be an exaggeration to say that no one reads academic publications; but it has been recognized for several decades by sociologists and communication theorists that *almost* nobody reads them.[19] This situation is not as bad as it may appear and there is no cause for nihilism. Many of us will have had the experience of finding an obscure article or a book published a century ago, sometimes sealed behind uncut pages, which proves exceptionally helpful for current research, despite three generations of neglect. One of the problems often pointed out with the new measurement of scholarly impact used to apportion UK university research funding from 2014 -- the REF (Research Excellence Framework) -- is precisely that the readership of academic publications in the humanities extends across many years, with its non-academic impact perhaps delayed still further. Yet we ought to be realistic about the mobility of the ideas contained in such publications.

Let us now examine the situation from the perspective of the reader. All academics pretend to read a great deal of academic research, and depending on the definition of 'reading', the claim may be true. But I do know that until recently the number of published academic books I had actually *fully* read in my life probably numbered within a few dozen (the majority of these review books).[20] I am emboldened to make this admission by that of Ernst Gombrich in one of his essays: 'We all know the visitors to our libraries who ask in an awestruck tone: have you read all these books?

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[19] See e.g. R.K. Merton, *The Sociology of Science* (Chicago, 1979), 448; cf. id. 'The Matthew Effect in Science', *Science* 159 (1968), 56-63 (with references).

[20] This situation has been transformed by my service on a REF panel, with the intensive reading for the purpose of assessment which this requires.

and we have to confess that we bought some not to read but to use, and the others in the fond hope that the time would come when we could read them at last.'[21]

I am a slow reader. But the volume of new academic publications is such that it would be simply impossible even for more diligent colleagues, to read more than a tiny fraction of the current literature of their subject, whether new documentary material, synthetic discussions, or debates. As a rather crude demonstration I conducted a rather casual, personal experiment, looking at one randomly selected month of new publications (books only) in the field of classical studies (including classical art and archaeology), as listed by the online journal *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* in September 2010.[22] From this list I selected those volumes which I personally *ought* either to read or skim through because of their relevance to aspects of my research or teaching in the fields of archaeology and ancient history. Thus ignoring periodicals, which probably constitute the bulk of what one should be reading, we arrive at 16 books, comprising 5,230 pages: that is an impossible daily allocation of 174.3 pages of reading. Of course, this consists only of new publications, and ignores the backlog of the last century or so. (We can see now, incidentally, why one of the most useful transferable skills taught by universities is the ability to speed-read and select what is relevant from academic texts.)

Somehow, we manage this difficult situation. But it is worth mentioning once again in order to stress the physical limitations on the dissemination of ideas and knowledge. There are other limitations which are, however, seldom acknowledged. In the humanities, the language barrier is one; it is less of a problem in the sciences, where English is the lingua franca. In the study of classical art and archaeology English is the main language of scholarship, but is followed closely by German and Italian. The anglophone classical archaeologist is expected to have a reading ability in German, Italian, French, sometimes Spanish and modern Greek, to say nothing of Latin and ancient Greek or any languages particular to a regional specialism, such Arabic. Even where this knowledge genuinely exists, the relative difficulty of working in a foreign language tends to encourage disproportionate attention to publications in one's own language. This is a particular problem for English speakers, to our shame, but it is by no means limited to us.

Let us now return to the publications themselves. How does one publish research? The traditional mechanism is the selection of articles or typescripts by editors. Therefore, despite the exponential increase in academic publications, there is in fact a filtering process. Peer review is regarded as best practice, though it is notoriously problematic because of its tendency to militate against innovation, interdisciplinarity, and originality. Steve Jones recounts how one reader of Darwin's manuscript for *The Origin of Species* suggested that it would be a tremendous success, provided it were rewritten to focus more on pigeon-breeding.[23] There has been a lot of debate recently, in the sciences especially, about the value of peer review, its biases and conservative tendencies.[24]

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[21] E.H. Gombrich, 'The Tradition of General Knowledge', in idem, *Ideas and Idols: Essays on Value in History and in Art* (London, 1979), 9-23, at 10.
[22] http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2010/2010-10-01.html (last consulted 6/9/12).
[23] S. Jones, *Almost Like a Whale* (London, 1999), 29.
[24] See e.g. D. Shatz, *Peer Review: A Critical Inquiry* (Lanham, MD, 2004).

It is safe to say that in the humanities peer-review is less important. Generally speaking, if there is an error or a false premise in an art-historical article, no one actually dies as a result (which is probably just as well). Consequently the humanities lend themselves to the less restricted, more informal dissemination of ideas which the internet particularly fosters, even though the resultant increase in 'published' material makes it all the more difficult for individual readers to process.

Let us imagine, however, that an art historian is publishing through the traditional process, and sets about producing a scholarly article or book for the press. Art history almost invariably requires illustrations. And this is where one of the most pernicious material filtering processes occurs.

For a start, the author is usually responsible for subsidizing any such publication by paying both for the illustrations themselves and the necessary publication rights. Because of the costs of printing, publishers often restrict the number of images and certainly in classical art history, the pictures must usually be in black and white, even where colour pictures are obtainable. Even without this restriction, the number of illustrations is strictly limited by the income of the academic, or the generosity of their institution or funders. For photographs and photographic rights are expensive. Even at special academic rates, and for reproduction in a relatively uncommercial academic text, it is not unusual for a single black and white photograph plus publication rights to amount to between 50 and 100 UK pounds if provided by a museum, or maybe one or two hundred pounds if it is provided by a commercial photo agency. Many European institutions require payment by bank transfer, which, for a British academic, can mean adding another 15-25 pounds onto the fee to cover bank charges.

That is not even the principal problem with images. Photographs of works of art in museums are normally only obtainable from the museums themselves. Sometimes, even significant works in large museums have never been photographed, or the photographs cannot be found. Sometimes the *objects* cannot be found. Often overworked staff in museums simply do not reply even to repeated requests for photographs or rights. Some of us are fortunate in the support we have received from our institutions or from grants, but for most academics the gathering of photos for a major publication can occupy literally weeks of work. Therefore, to cost the process transparently we should probably add several thousands of pounds onto the notional expenses of illustrating a book.

These obstacles constitute the occluded infrastructure of research; the metahistory of art. We stage the communication of our academic work in such a way that the apparatus underlying it remains discreetly hidden. Yet the forces of resistence to the dissemination of research have a formative role in determining what is communicated. Perhaps there should be greater public acknowledgement of these material factors, so that the consumer of academic work can have a clearer understanding of how it has been generated -- rather like listing food additives in the ingredients on packets. I provide here a doctored version of a caption from one my own publications, which might provide a model. I confess that I have never quite had the nerve to suggest it to a publisher, though credit is due to Julian Stallabrass for his

book *High Art Light* (London, 1999), which does have the courage to make the hidden constraints on illustration part of the history.

The truth is that the availability of images does have a real impact on the stories of art that we tell. In many publications of classical art, especially general discussions, the same repertoire of images circulates, with cheaper or more accessible photos -- like those available from the German Archaeological Institute in Rome -- tending to dominate, like the play-list of a regional radio-station.

It is worth mentioning here that even if every work in a museum could be reproduced through accessible and affordable photographs -- and the majority cannot -- they would only represent a proportion of the works of art in existence. In respect to classical antiquities, the countless works in private collections and on the art market, usually inaccessible, often unpublishable because of their questionable origins, and sometimes very odd and atypical, might greatly expand, and indeed transform the history of ancient art.

The archaeology of the ideas?

We have barely touched on the internet and electronic resources - too large a subject to address here, but one of ever greater relevance to the norms of academic research and publication in the humanities. It is important, however, to note in passing the capacity of digital media, as intellectual solvents, to overcome some of the forms of resistance to scholarship that we have discussed above. While in classical art history the digital resources of greatest value at present do not represent a radical departure. For instance, web publications are often simply traditional publications in digital form. Yet naturally the internet offers unprecedented potential for the dissolution of intellectual boundaries and for making otherwise unenvisaged connections. Never has so much information been *available* to the researcher. This is a boon, but also a challenge. Digital technology presents us with a superabundance of information, and we have not yet established processes for determining how it is to be processed - what parameters *should* be created, what connections *ought* to be made, in the face of the intellectual expansion of the world wide web. As it happens, the dilemma is aleady faced by the modern archaeologist when excavating a rich site according to contemporary best practice: can all the data available ever practically be recorded, processed, or used by others? Should research questions dictate what is selectively recorded, and what is ignored or even discarded? We might ask whether the internet age will ultimately bring us to the point, in our excavation of knowledge, that we are forced - like the Bourbon excavators in Campania - to devise ruthless methods of eliminating what we do not want.

Nevertheless, whatever the future means of disseminating knowledge, whatever barriers are removed to the sharing of information, there will always be *internal* resistance on the part of researchers. Perhaps resistance to ideas is our natural state. In any case, ideas travel slowly and the resistance that they face is different in different circumstances.

This brings me to my second (rather scientistic) experiment, conducted as it happens with the aid of an electronic resource -- the journals database JSTOR.[25] In selectively storing in searchable form the output of academic journals over a period of decades, JSTOR allows us to gauge in a crudely quantitative way the differential pace at which academic ideas and intellectual fashions are adopted. This is scarcely dependable research, but a couple of graphs generated from JSTOR searches can illustrate what we already known anecdotally about the transmission of ideas through academic scholarship.

Graph 1 is a result of a search among article titles for the word 'gender', which traces the progressively more confident use of that word (and therefore the concept behind it) in three disciplines acknowledged by JSTOR -- sociology, art history, and classical studies -- since the 1950s. Unsurprisingly, the first phenomenon to be noted is a large rise in 'gender' titles starting in the early 1970s. The rate of that rise needs to be offset by the rise in the number of journals throughout this period, and obviously by the number of journals included in the JSTOR database. Such factors are hard to extract from the data, so the absolute numbers and the rate of increase are not as meaningful as they appear. What is important is not so much the rise in the use of the term 'gender' as that fact that the rise begins in art history and classics some 15 years later than in sociology. In other words, there is a significant time-lag in the adoption of one of the most important critical terms of the last 40 years in the humanities and social sciences.

Graph 2 is a bit more subtle, as it is generated from full-text searches in four disciplinary areas, in order to trace the rise of the word 'discourse' -- used mainly from the perspective of critical theory -- in academic articles. Here again, it is not so much the obvious rise in usage that should interest us, but the different timelines for various disciplines, with the historians and sociologists embracing 'discourse' avidly in the 1970s, the cautious art-historians following close behind the others in the late 1970s, and the classicists not catching up until the late 80s. (And having been a classics undergraduate from 1990 I can attest to the fact that the word 'discourse' was endemic in certain circles in that period.)

Although these surveys suppress the influence of individual works of scholarship, it is clear that the impact of Michel Foucault and his concept of discourse developed in his 1969 work, *L'archéologie du savoir* (*The Archaeology of Knowledge*) has to be factored in here. Imagine these results from JSTOR as a kind of material evidence susceptible to a more literal kind of archaeology of knowledge. Such an archaeology would identify general stylistic trends in the material record, albeit developing at different paces within different (intellectual) regions. The future historical archaeologist of ideas would be able to correlate the impact of a known individual (Foucault in this case) with the broader trends observable in the evidence, just as an historical archaeologist of ancient art might be able to correlate artistic developments (the advent of a flourishing pottery tradition, for instance, or the invention of classical naturalism) with documented events or people.

Note one final conclusion suggested by the graphs: that, along with the sociologists, classicists and art historians may now be in the last years of the Discursive Period,

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[25] http://www.jstor.org

whereas the apparent trajectory of the graph suggests that the concept has some distance still to travel within the discipline of history.

All of this merely illustrates in a rather coarse manner what any academic recognizes from personal experience -- that academic disciplines follow rather similar courses, but at different rates, with only partly permeable barriers between them, and those barriers exist through conceptual resistance, an also because of mundane and material factors.

Epilogue: Kunstarchäologie

Let us finish with a bizarre story that both illustrates some of my points and explains the title of this paper. The term 'art-archaeology' was chosen firstly because my concern is the archaeology of art -- the special factors involved when art has to be studied as archaeological material. But 'art-archaeology' also implies the potential for thinking about art history in archaeological ways. More specifically, art-archaeology is a term more or less coined by one German archaeologist, in a way that the German language characteristically allows. The phrase was very occasionally used before him, but never since, and it is to all intents and purposes his invention. The archaeologist was the great Adolf Michaelis. Michaelis was an extraordinarily able, perceptive, and witty scholar who is best known in the anglophone world today for his important catalogue, *Ancient Marbles in Great Britain* (Oxford, 1882).

In 1906 he published in German a history of archaeology: *Die archäologischen Entdeckungen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* ('the archaeological discoveries of the nineteenth century'*)*. He made clear in the preface that he was concerned specifically with 'Kunstarchäologie' -- art-archaeology -- and the 1908 edition was retitled, *Ein Jahrhundert kunstarchäologischer Entdeckungen* ('a century of art-archaeological discoveries'), though in the English edition 'kunstarchäologisch' was simply rendered as 'archaeological'.

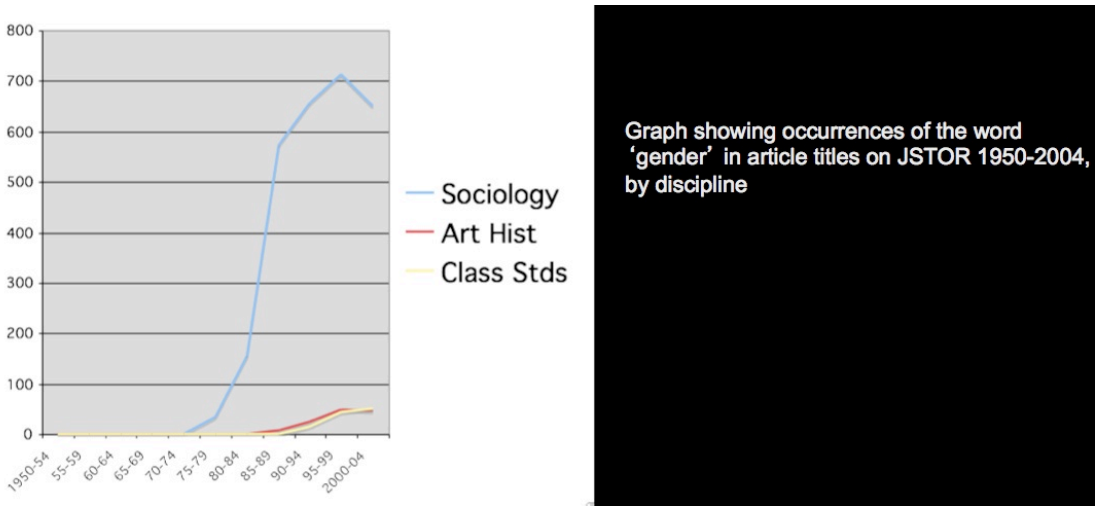
In Europe, even in Germany, Michaelis's book is largely forgotten, or at least seldom consulted, but it has a curious afterlife elsewhere, as recounted by Zheng Yan[26] (after the mention above of the language barrier in academic research, I should freely admit that I owe my understanding of his article entirely to a colleague, Dr Lukas Nickel, who drew it to my attention). By 1929 Adolf Michaelis's book had been translated into Chinese via Japanese, where it became -- and remains -- an important and influential work of western archaeology. Into the Chinese language it introduced the Germanic term art-archaeology, which is literally rendered as *meishu kaogu*.

Meishu kaogu -- art-archaeology -- is one of the major branches of archaeological study in China. The phrase is regularly used, even in the titles if institutes, and it is regarded as an import from the terminology of western scholarship. In reality, of course, the term never caught on in Europe -- it is virtually untranslatable and perhaps does not make perfect sense even in German.

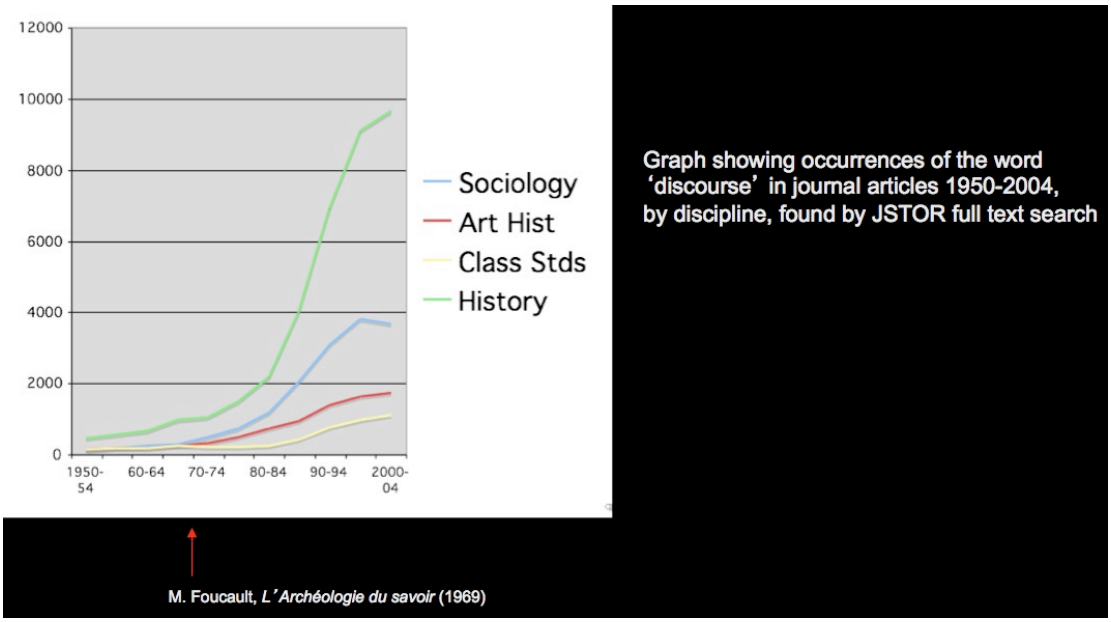
[26] Zheng Yan, *Meishu Yanjiu* 2010-11, 16-25.

This is not the place to comment on how much a term such as this is capable not only of describing but also *informing* the content of an academic discourse. But this strange example demonstrates that ideas not only face resistance, but because of resistant factors -- language, the mechanisms of publication, the arbitrary preferences of an author -- they move in mysterious ways.

[last edited 5th May, 2014]



Graph 1



Graph 2