Papers of the British School at Rome **90** (2022), pp. 356–72

RESEARCH REPORTS

A number of 2019–20 and 2020–21 awards had to be suspended or deferred, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, to late 2021–2 and to 2022–3. Reports will be included in the next volume of Papers of the British School at Rome *where this is the case.*

Balsdon Fellowships

doi: 10.1017/S0068246222000101

Ancient Greek accounts of lost architecture and their influence, from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment

My project at the British School at Rome explored how Italian architects, artists and scholars, *c.* 1400–1600, interpreted the rich descriptions of architecture in classical Greek literature when conceptualising and representing the lost buildings of Greece and the Near East, whether in text, image or stone.

Scholars tend to frame Renaissance and early modern approaches to ancient buildings through the prism of two main sources: Vitruvius' *De architectura* and the material evidence of classical ruins, together with the testimony of ancient sculpture and coins. There have been many studies of the Vitruvian tradition, of extant Renaissance surveys of ancient buildings, and of ancient sculptural and numismatic depictions of architecture. Largely forgotten, however, are the many other classical texts that describe architecture, which if taken together constitute a considerable source of information. Particularly notable in this respect are Greek historians and geographers, who refer to numerous structures around the Mediterranean basin and beyond, as far as Persia and India. The monuments they describe — often at length — were located in prominent positions, acting as landmarks, memorials or statements of power.

My work focused on ancient Greek texts vis-à-vis fifteenth-century art and scholarship. Certain questions arose, time and again. How was architecture known only from authors such as Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, Strabo and Pausanias, translated into images, texts and buildings? And how did these interpretations of a plurality of architectural forms fit into a broader creative dialogue with antiquity? The answers could potentially reorientate our current Romanocentric reading of early modern European architecture and its sources.

At the start of the fifteenth century, after a long absence, the manuscripts of Greek historians and geographers finally returned to Italy. Their arrival proved a windfall, initially for scholars, but subsequently for artists and architects. The first phase of research was conducted in Roman manuscript collections, where I traced the humanist use of Greek historians and geographers for information about architecture outside Italy. Key manuscripts for this stage of the project included a number of the first Greek codices to enter Italy and their early copies. My work also concentrated on Latin translations of the Greek texts, especially the renderings of Strabo by Guarino da Verona and Gregorio Tifernate, Matteo Palmieri's interpretation of Herodotus, and two versions of Diodorus Siculus, one by Poggio Bracciolini, the other by Iacopo di San Cassiano.

The text of these translations was compared against material incorporated by Leon Battista Alberti into his magnum opus, *De re aedificatoria*, and in the process revealed his process of clever borrowing and rewording. Such descriptions of long-gone buildings in Greece, Egypt and Mesopotamia — not to mention India and the Far North — helped Alberti establish a global framework for interpreting architecture's origins and evolution, with ramifications for his own built oeuvre.

In tandem, I examined fifteenth-century Latin commentaries on Roman authors and poets, with their frequent references to Greek accounts of architecture. Niccolò Perotti's commentary on Martial, for instance, turns to Strabo and Herodotus in order to provide detailed analysis of the Seven Wonders referenced in the epigrams. The work of Pomponio Leto, a figure often characterised as the arch-Roman antiquarian, contains a similar wealth of citations from Greek sources. Leto's commentary on the *Thebaid* by Statius makes abundant use of Diodorus and Strabo on cities around the Eastern Mediterranean. His writings on Ciceronian orations, moreover, are studded with excerpts from Strabo on Eastern architecture. Notes made by one of his students reveal that, even when discussing the monuments of classical Rome, Leto was thinking in terms of Egyptian architecture.

The second phase of my research built on this textual foundation by considering the presence of Diodorus in Pinturicchio's frescoes at the Vatican Palace. In the *Sala dei Santi* of the Appartamento Borgia (1492–94) Pinturicchio depicts ancient Egyptian monuments and customs following reports in Diodorus, which were transmitted to the painter by a scholar with an interest in the Osiris myth. Traditionally, the role of adviser has been ascribed to Giovanni Nanni, better known as Annio da Viterbo. My research to date suggests that the programme should rather be considered a collaborative effort by several scholars who took an interest in the writings of Diodorus on Egypt. Further work at the Bibliotheca Hertziana on the frescoes' iconography revealed a network of allusions to the sacred landscape of Petrine landmarks and the Old St Peter's.

After the tribulations of the last couple of years, my months in Rome came as a restorative balm. I re-encountered the city and appreciated it on new terms. And I learned so much from artists and academics alike, in the true tradition of the British School.

Peter Fane-Saunders

doi: 10.1017/S0068246222000113

Rome at war: urban memories from the death of the Regime to the birth of the First Republic

During my stay at the BSR I understood the true value of researching place while in place. Because my project was about finding traces of the past in the contemporary city my targeted field-work was ineffably enriched by the serendipity of what I found in my daily walks. Three months is barely enough and can merely bring us to the Socratic notion of only knowing that we know nothing about a new topic. But it was three