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Michael Scott

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## INTRODUCTION: SPACE AND SOCIETY

On 28 October 1943, Winston Churchill commented, apropos of how to rebuild the House of Commons following its destruction in a wartime air raid, ‘We shape our buildings and afterwards our buildings shape us.’ Over the last thirty years, in the fields of anthropology, sociology, geography and archaeology, in what has often been labelled the ‘spatial turn’, Churchill’s observations have been endorsed, investigated and expanded at an ever-increasing rate. Today, we think about spaces – from the individual room to the widest landscape – in an exciting variety of ways. Spaces can no longer stand solely or primarily as static geographical entities, but instead as fluid social constructs. They reflect and articulate practices of social behaviour. They exist in physical and perceptual forms, constructed through material, literary and epigraphical sources. Their meanings are dynamic and multiple thanks to the vibrant, subtle, complex and often unpredictable ways in which they interact with their (many and varied) users over time.<sup>1</sup>

This book asks what use such a reconfigured understanding of space can be to the study of ancient history. That different resolutions of space are firmly fixed on the historian’s radar is undeniable: recent commissions for this Key Themes in Ancient History series, for example, include L. Nevett *Domestic Space in Classical Antiquity*; A. Zuiderhoek *The Ancient City* and D. Dueck and K. Brodersen *Geography in Classical Antiquity*. In addition, recent large-scale research projects across Europe, such as HESTIA, PELAGIOS and TOPOI, have sought to examine spatial issues within both literary and physical contexts.<sup>2</sup> What this book sets out to achieve,

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the relevant theoretical works on space, see the bibliographic essay.

<sup>2</sup> HESTIA: Herodotus Encoded Space-Text-Imaging Archive (Open University, UK); PELAGIOS: Enable Linked Ancient Geodata in Open Systems (Open University, UK), as well as related project GAP (Google Ancient Places); TOPOI: Formation and Transformation of space and knowledge in Ancient civilisations (Berlin, Germany).

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in contrast, is not so much to understand one particular level or type of space, but rather to set out an argument for (and the potential of) a much broader engagement between history and space across the study of the Greek and Roman worlds.

In the first section of this introduction, I investigate the particular kinds of (literary and physical) spaces in which current Greek and Roman scholarship has been interested. Such an analysis in turn will provide some insights into how Greek scholarship and Roman scholarship have each approached the study of space as well as into how those kinds of spaces framed, and functioned within, the ancient world. In the second section, I ask how such spatial investigations can be useful for the study of broader historical themes, and make the case not only for casting a wider net in terms of the different kinds of spaces suitable for analysis, but also for the advantages such a broader spatial approach can offer when ‘doing’ history. In the final section, I outline five case-studies, to be discussed over the course of the book, which seek to demonstrate the potential of spatial analysis in ancient history. In the subsequent chapters, each case-study – the majority of which cross the time span of the Greek and Roman worlds – focuses on a different kind of space. These spaces range: in size (from agora to the lived *oikoumene*); in nature (from physical to perceptual); in tenor (from political to religious to funerary), and in the evidence through which they are represented and constructed (from archaeological material to epigraphic to literary and to a combination of all three) as well as in their geographical location in the Mediterranean world (from Cyrene to Delos to Rome to Syracuse).

At the end of this book, I sum up how these case-studies have helped us improve our understanding of the ancient world, and finish by examining how these approaches to different kinds of spaces across the Greek and Roman worlds help us also to think about how these two worlds thought differently about space, and negotiated space as part of the broader interaction between them. In so doing, I hope to demonstrate not only that a spatial approach is a feasible and useful tool in the historian’s arsenal, but that a spatial approach is, actually, indispensable to constructing a well-rounded, textured and credible understanding of the complexity of the ancient world.

#### SPACE: THE STORY SO FAR

Some of the earliest discussions of space as reflecting and articulating social behaviour, perception and outlook within Greek and Roman studies took

place not in relation to physical space, but rather in relation to spaces created within literary works. Vidal-Naquet, in his seminal work *The Black Hunter* (Vidal-Naquet 1986), for example, underlined the Kantian belief that space and time functioned as the basis of all intuitions, and examined how the changing conceptualisation of space, particularly liminal spaces, within different literary works, both reflected and constructed changing spatial structures in both the social and the physical Greek world over time. The study of the way in which different ancient authors constructed and thought about space has also developed with an eye to the philosophers in the work of Sorabji (1988), Algra (1995) and Stevens (forthcoming), to the tragedians particularly in the work of Rehm (2002), Lamari (2010), Seaford (2012), to Hellenic poetry both ancient and modern in Leontis (1995), Fitter (1995) and Calame (2009), and to the ancient novel (Paschalis and Frangoulidis 2002). The focus continues through major research projects such as HESTIA and the Amsterdam-based Space in Literature project (Jong 2012), with digital projects such as HESTIA responding to the interactive possibilities created by the now vast numbers of ancient texts online (e.g. via Perseus).

Space in Roman-period literature has equally been a subject for study (e.g. Leach 1988; Spencer 2006; Jones 2011), particularly focusing either on the period of the early Empire or on travel writers such as Pausanias who presented the Greek world to a Roman audience. Scholars, for example, now speak of Pausanias' *Periegesis* as a 'cognitive map' that interweaves spaces, monuments, myths and legends to express 'a particular ideology of Hellenism' (Hutton 2005: 314), and in which his landscape of Greece is a 'rhetorical discourse' (Elsner 2001: 18). The key points to emerge so far from the study of space in literature have been: the presence of multiple 'views' of, and ways of understanding, the same physical landscape at one time and over time (e.g. the meanings of mountainous spaces: Buxton 1992); the occasional disjuncture and contradiction in the portrayal of spaces between the literary and the physical world (e.g. the changing importance of the boundary between city and countryside: Jones 2004; Rosen and Sluiter 2006), and the wider, culturally contrasting ways of using and talking about space demonstrated in the Greek as opposed to the Latin sources (e.g. the preference for simultaneous double-action spaces in the Greek novel in contrast to preference for single-action space in Latin ones: Konstan 2002).

Such literary interest has of course been fuelled by the increasing deployment of different kinds of spatial analysis on different physical resolutions and kinds of space across a range of civilisations (cf. Étienne 1996;

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Osterhammel 1998; Schroer 2006; Schlögel 2007). For example, a major focus has been the study of the individual building, particularly domestic, both within and outside the classical world (e.g. Rapoport 1969; Rapoport 1982; Kent 1990). In scholarship focused on the Greek world, as Nevett's recent Key Themes in Ancient History volume, alongside her earlier work, points out (Nevett 1999; 2010), housing – from architectural layout, to furnishings, to room use – is shaped by culturally specific expectations and systems. The analysis of Greek domestic space has thus brought important insights to bear on particular cultural activities undertaken within that space (such as symposia) and on the gendered division of particular spaces, but also on strategies of definition and engagement within wider communities (cf. Cahill 2002) as well as across regions and in different periods (cf. Souvatzi 2008).

In Roman scholarship on domestic space, thanks to plentiful surviving evidence at key sites such as Ostia and Pompeii, studies have focused even more closely on how domestic space reflects and articulates sequences of movement and interaction, helps us understand the continued interaction between the 'function' and the 'character' of particular spaces (e.g. of individual rooms within a house), as well as how such spaces play an important part in wider issues of identity, power display, community structure and hierarchy (cf. Wallace-Hadrill 1988; Wallace-Hadrill 1994; Laurence and Wallace-Hadrill 1997; Grahame 2000; Hales 2003; Allison 2004). Because of the important part gardens played in the space of the Roman house, as well as the focus on them within Latin literature, these have also been a strong focus for Roman spatial scholarship (e.g. Jashemski 1979; von Stackelberg 2009; Jones 2011). What such studies of Greek and Roman domestic space continue to emphasise, in conjunction with studies of the home as a literary topos, is a series of fundamental differences between the Greek and Roman house, particularly in terms of their metaphorical meaning and spatial articulation (e.g. the Roman house as an important extension of the self: Bergmann 2007: 224).

Another increasing focus of spatial scholarship has been at the level of the city, again reflected in Zuiderhoek's forthcoming Key Themes in Ancient History volume on the ancient city, and in recent cross-cultural treatments of ancient world city development (cf. Smith 2003; Gates 2011). Yet in comparison to the study of the city in other periods, particularly the modern and the Renaissance city, the study of the ancient city as a series of connected and overlapping spaces, formulated and understood through dynamic and multiplicitous cultural expectations, individual experiences and human needs, rather than simply as a collection of different,

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changing forms of architecture, is really only just taking off (cf. Blake 2004: 239).<sup>3</sup> Early work on the ancient Greek *polis* and Roman *urbs* consisted of studies of their architectural organisation (e.g. Ward-Perkins 1974), or development over time (e.g. Murray and Price 1990). Yet more recently in scholarship on the Greek world, the focus has shifted to the relationship between town and countryside (e.g. Osborne 1987; Rosen and Sluiter 2006), and, thanks in part to the work of the Copenhagen Polis Centre (e.g. Hansen and Nielsen 2004), the development of the polis not simply in terms of architecture, but as a space of interaction, negotiation, memory and identity display (e.g. Vlassopoulos 2007; Ma 2009; Owen and Preston 2009).

In contrast to the study of the Greek polis, because of the high degree of material survival of 'cities' in Italy such as Rome, Ostia and Pompeii as well as throughout the Empire, Roman scholarship on space and the city has been in many ways much more diverse and intricate. There have been studies of user-movement through, and interaction with, civic space in Pompeii (Bon and Jones 1997) and Rome (Bjur and Santillo-Frizell 2009; Laurence and Newsome 2011), studies of the varying ways of experiencing the different sites of Rome (Larmour and Spencer 2007; O'Sullivan 2011) and cities around the Roman Empire (e.g. Spieser 2001; March 2009; Laurence et al. 2011), as well as the spatial construction and perception of different kinds of urban space (e.g. Flohr 2007). Underlining such studies is the critical importance of the centrality of Rome as a model for urban space within the Roman world, and the constant referencing back to Rome in cities that were spread through the Empire in a way that never happened in the Classical Greek world and only to a more limited extent in the Hellenistic Period (Kaiser 2000; Purcell 2007).

In comparison to urban space, sacred space has received a great deal more attention. In Greek scholarship, this has focused on three aspects: first, the roles of sacred space within the wider landscape (Alcock and Osborne 1994; de Polignac 1995; Cole 2004); second, the spatial dynamics and development of sacred space itself (e.g. Scully 1969; Doxiadis 1972; Scott 2010) and third, most recently, an interest in the user-experience of, as well as changing perception of and interaction with, sacred space, particularly during the Hellenistic and Roman Periods (e.g. 'Rethinking the Gods: Post-Classical Approaches to Sacred Space', Oxford Conference 2010; Burrell 2009). In Roman scholarship, while much work has been

<sup>3</sup> Modern city: e.g. Benevolo 1980, Certeau 1984, Brand 1994, Smagacz 2008. Renaissance city: e.g. Trexler 1980, Muir and Weissman 1989, Zimmerman and Weissman 1989.

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done on Roman religious practice, the focus on the dynamics of sacred space has interestingly most often been in areas outside Rome (e.g. Smith 2001; Steinsapir 2005; Veronese 2006), or on the changes to the sacred landscape as a result of the supremacy of Roman over Etruscan culture, particularly in the way boundaries and networks of sacred spaces were conceived of and understood in the landscape (Grey 2005; Edlund-Berry 2006), or indeed through wider cross-cultural comparisons with Roman attitudes to sacred space (Woodard 2006).

Such integrated analyses of sacred space in both Greek and Roman scholarship, have, however, often been hindered by the publication style of many sanctuary excavation reports, which tend to split off architecture, sculpture and epigraphy from one another, or else study individual structures in isolation from their contexts, thus making the forming of a contextualised spatial view (and a conception of spatial development over time) a difficult enterprise. Yet what spatial study in both Greek and Roman scholarship is increasingly making clear is the crucial role sacred space plays as a resource for the articulation and transmission of culture and practice within the Greek and Roman worlds as well as between them.

Linked into the study of the place of sacred space within the wider landscape has been the study of the landscape itself. How communities constructed both physical and perceptual patterns in their native landscapes has been the subject of much study at both theoretical and practical levels across different cultures, especially those of Greece and Rome (e.g. Tilley 1994; Ashmore and Knapp 1999; Thomas 2001; Tilley and Bennett 2004). The data used for such analyses have migrated from prominent monuments and features in the landscape (e.g. Bender 1993) to data collected and interpreted through Geographical information systems (GIS) and surface-survey techniques (e.g. Broodbank 1999; van Haverbeke et al. 2008), although concerns have been raised recently over the interpretations associated with such techniques (e.g. Fitzjohn 2007). At the same time, the development of network theory has encouraged scholars to create integrated analyses of the networked landscape of the Mediterranean (e.g. Horden and Purcell 2000) as well as case-study-based analysis of different types of networked space within the Greek and Roman landscapes (e.g. Constantakopoulou 2007; Dürrwächter 2009; Malkin et al. 2009; Carruseco 2010).

Here too, however, an important practical distinction is to be drawn between the conduct of archaeology in Greece and Italy. In Greece, surface-survey still counts as one of the maximum five projects allowed

to each foreign country per year, and all of those applications have to be submitted *via* that country's archaeological school based in Athens. In Italy, by contrast, surface-surveys are not subject to a maximum, nor does any project have to be 'queued' through a foreign school but can be carried out in direct agreement with the local Soprintendenza. This allows for the possibility (other factors such as finance taken into consideration) for more extensive landscape work to be carried out there than is possible in Greece. As a result, in Italy-based landscape studies, there has been, particularly in the last fifteen years, the freedom for a tremendous effort to counteract the overwhelming focus on Rome by developing a detailed understanding of regional history, rural demography and particularly the villa landscape (e.g. Barker 1996; Dyson 2003; Terrenato 2007; Witcher 2009; Launaro 2011).

Landscapes and networks on their grandest scale connect with studies of how the ancients understood and conceptualised the whole extent of their world (cf. Romm 1992; Dueck and Brodersen 2012), its continuing interconnectedness and 'globalisation' (cf. La Bianca and Scham 2006). Much work has been done on the changing Greek spatial and geographical constructs of the world (e.g. Cole 2010; Romm 2010), from Achilles' shield description in the *Iliad*, to the early development of world maps by Anaximander of Miletus, through Herodotus' three-continent division of the world, to Plato's 'frogs around a pond' and the Aristotelian tendency to place Greece at the centre of the earth and link geographic placement to political and military value.

In contrast, it has traditionally been acknowledged that, while the Romans obviously imposed themselves strongly on the landscape with definitive lasting impact, the attitudes and techniques with which they made sense of the world are more difficult to grasp in any precise detail (cf. Foxhall et al. 2007: 108; Talbert 2010). Such attitudes are even harder to fathom thanks to the loss of maps such as Marcus Agrippa's *orbis terrarum* and the scanty survival of the Justinian marble plan. But there has been strong debate, for example, about the degree to which Romans understood the world from a 'hodological', 'itinerary-led perspective' (discussions about which are often focused on the surviving thirteenth-century Peutinger map, the only surviving copy of the Roman *cursus publicus*: Brodersen 1995; Salway 2007; Talbert 2004). As a result, the different ways in which the Greeks and Romans conceptualised their worlds is becoming slowly clearer, e.g. in their attitudes to crossing open water (Salway 2004).

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## SPACE AS PART OF THE STUDY OF HISTORY

Many of the themes brought out in this short review of the different genres of space and spatial study will have immediate and obvious use for the historian (cf. Sauer 2004). Perhaps above all else, space has been involved in two recent major (interrelated) historical and archaeological fields of enquiry in the Greek and Roman worlds: memory and identity. The way in which spaces reflect and articulate social behaviour, meaning and belief, thus making them charged and valuable arenas in which to act and interject, ensures that they are fundamental to the physical construction of memory within a community and the presentation and experience of that community's identity (cf. Jones 1997; Malkin 2001; Lomas 2004; Meskell and Preucel 2004). Such presentation and experience are often likely to be complicated by the fact that different spaces may offer overlapping or conflicting interpretations, and are certainly likely to be experienced and understood in multiple, unpredictable ways by different users (cf. Alcock 2002). Equally, over time, such physical spaces will also reflect a multitude of changing attitudes towards, as well as projections of, the collective memory and identity of that community (cf. van Dyke and Alcock 2003). To this mix needs to be added the ways in which the different literary sources construct their own views not only of issues of memory and identity (cf. Hall 1997), but also of the nature, interpretation and experiences of particular spaces, which often can contrast starkly with the picture inferable from the material evidence. As Bintliff (2006) points out with reference to the relationship between city and countryside in the Greek world, if the physical evidence is often taken to highlight a complete blurring of the boundaries between the two, why does the literature seem to work so hard to create such a strong distinction between them (for further debate on this issue: Osborne 1987; Jones 2004)?

Yet my belief is that spatial study has the ability to be of much broader use to the historian in a wider variety of fields of enquiry than simply memory and identity, because it taps into, focuses on and makes possible a number of routes of enquiry currently much sought after in the study of ancient history. A focus on space demands an interest in linkages and relationships between spaces, architecture, objects and users. It foregrounds the importance of human movement and visual perspective in creating multiple experiences and understanding of the world and society (cf. Burrell 2009; O'Sullivan 2011). It links different levels of space (house, city, landscape, wider world) and offers different resolutions of activity through its privileging of contextuality. All of these elements help to draw us away from the tendency to

consider objects, buildings and sites in isolation from the networks in which they exist and which they help to constitute.

Equally, such studies, particularly using techniques of GIS and field survey, are increasingly providing data which can transport us outside the major settlements that have been such a long-term focus for study (Rome, Athens, etc.), and which are now increasingly recognised as atypical examples rather than normative ones. At the same time, spatial study opens up for analysis arenas of social interaction at lower levels of ancient society (e.g. smaller settlements, housing for all levels of society, patterns of use of everyday as well as prestige objects), which rarely are the focus of the often elite-orientated literary sources, thus allowing for an increasingly sophisticated appreciation of how social change is conducted, as well as motivated, from the bottom up as part of a gradual process as well as imposed from the top.

Spatial study also focuses our attention on the decision processes and active choices involved in the design and creation of different spaces and what fills those spaces (cf. Tanner 2006; Scott 2007; 2010). Yet it also forces us to think about these 'intended' meanings as but one of the ways in which such spaces can be conceived, 'used', experienced and understood, by underlining the mutability of meaning and number of participants active in creating that meaning (for the continuing debate around concepts of agency: cf. Gell 1998; Dobres and Robb 2000; Gardner 2004a; Osborne and Tanner 2007). Spatial study thus opens up an opportunity to shake loose some of the positivisms still remaining in ancient world scholarship and think about a much more textured, complex ancient world. Moreover, in an effort to understand that texture, spatial study requires an appreciation of both the material and literary sources, prodding us towards a much more integrated approach to the ancient world and helping to pull down the disciplinary boundaries that we have historically imposed on ourselves.

In addition, because of the ubiquity of spatial structures across cultures, spatial study offers an invaluable opportunity for feasible and worthwhile cross-cultural study. For our purposes, that allows us to think particularly about the ways in which the Greeks and Romans conceived of, constructed and reacted to particular kinds of space at different levels of society, and in turn how the two cultures interacted over, and within, different spaces. We have already seen some of the distinctions in attitudes to space between the Greek and Roman worlds outlined in current scholarship (for example, the spatial articulation of different social needs and desires in the Greek and Roman house seen through both material and literary evidence, the importance of the centre-and-periphery model

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for the spatial mimicking of Rome in cities throughout the Roman world, in contrast to the much more local differentiation in the less unified Greek world, the Roman ‘hodological’ (‘itinerary-led’) understanding of the wider world in contrast to Greek bird’s-eye, all-encompassing interest in geography). Yet there is still much to discover, particularly in relation to how these two approaches to space interacted, conflicted and reshaped one another within the several spatial arenas and periods in which these two cultures interacted.

Through spatial study, therefore, I argue that we can gain greater texture and depth for our historical understanding of particular places and events, a better appreciation of the experience and perception of cultural phenomena, and a clearer picture of the detailed interaction between different groups of peoples and entire cultures. This is an extremely useful reminder of the overlaps and contradictions between literary and material evidence as well as the plurality of ways in which the ancient world could be, and still can be, seen and understood.

## MOVING FORWARD

What follows is a series of five case-studies. Each case-study looks at a different type of space in a different geographical part of the Greek and Roman worlds, constructed through combinations of literary, epigraphic and archaeological sources. In each, I first seek briefly to situate my analysis within the major scholarly debates surrounding the case-study, in order to think about how a spatial approach can most usefully contribute to furthering our understanding in that particular area.

In Chapter 1, I examine the spatial development of the agora at Cyrene from the city’s inception to the fourth century AD. Within Greek and Roman studies, recent spatial analysis of private space has been much more prevalent than that of public space – an imbalance perhaps itself motivated by the traditional historical focus towards public architecture and civic space within both the study of ancient literature and site excavation. In Greek scholarship, for example, the examination of the agora as public space has been dominated by that of Athens (e.g. Thompson and Wycherley 1972; Millett 1998; Vlassopoulos 2007); the last major cross-polis comparison conducted before the advent of modern spatial studies was done in the 1950s (Martin 1951). What has become clear from these and similar studies is the importance of the agora within Greek culture and the flexibility of its purpose: as meeting place, market, place of politics and law, whose boundaries were marked and to which entry was controlled, thus creating