BACK MATTER

The Greek Container: Challenging Received Ideas about Ancient Greek Culture

JACQUELINE HAMPSHIRE

Greek vases and containers are among the most studied ancient Greek artifacts. They are numerous, diverse, and were adapted to an ever changing society. The adaptability of these particular artifacts makes them highly informative. As their civilization developed, declined, and rose again, the ancient Greeks demonstrated a capacity for innovation by continuing to produce containers to suit their needs and represent their values. Apart from displaying some quintessential works, the following exhibition will attempt to challenge pre-conceived ideas and stereotypes about Greek history. Did the Minoans really vanish without a trace? How dark where the Dark Ages? How do the vases of the geometric period tell a different story?

The vase, or container, provided an ideal medium for artistic representation. It was a common object, it provided a smooth surface and, integrally, it was present in the lives of all people; everyone had a need to store items. With the beginning of a trade industry, transportation of goods became increasingly important. In the home, containers were used for many purposes, from holding perfumes to storing grains and olives. Smaller cups and plates were used for social events and gatherings.[1] The container found its way into all social classes and areas of life and, as a result, has benefitted the modern scholar with its ability to reveal Greek history and culture.

Ancient Greek culture was constantly changing and developing. By transforming everyday objects into art, the Greeks found a way to communicate their history, their communal values and ideals. In this exhibition, viewers will be guided through Greek civilization, from the early Minoan and Mycenaean people through the Homeric ages to the height of Athens. Viewers will experience the ever-changing society through the different shapes, functions, and decorations of its vases and containers.

Stirrup jar with octopus
ca. 1200–1100 B.C, (53.11.6)
(*Photo: The Metropolitan Museum of Art*)

[1] Kathryn Topper, *The imagery of the Athenian symposium*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1

The Mycenaean and Minoan people have provided modern viewers and historians with some of the earliest known Mediterranean art. Stirrup jars (made from terracotta and used for transporting wine and oil) were designed to be easy to carry and hard to spill. This particular jar illustrates exquisite artistry, depicting an octopus, water creatures, and ornamental patterns. The focus on the sea might lead one to mistake this jar for a Minoan artifact, but the work is Mycenaean. Although the Minoan people are thought of today as 'sea people,'—because they relied heavily on the surrounding waters for the success of their culture—this jar reveals that the Mycenaeans also saw the sea as essential to their society. This stirrup jar suggests the influence of the Minoan culture on the later Mycenaeans, thus challenging the notion that the Minoans disappeared without trace. While historians have only vague explanations for why the Minoans disappeared, artifacts like this allow us to see their influence on later societies. Pieces such as this jar remind us that no culture can be understood in unitary terms; the Myceneaen society is more complex than many stereotypes indicate, while the Minoans have had a greater afterlife than imagined.

Pyxis (box with lid)
mid–8th century B.C, (48.11.5a,b)
(*Photo: The Metropolitan Museum of Art*)
This bizarrely shaped box is decorated in the geometric-style, prominent during the Greek Dark Ages and famous for its geometric shapes, straight lines, and repetitive patterns. In this particular example, the lines accentuate the strange shape as they are most complex at the widest point of the container. This Pyxis box demonstrates how an object's form may lead to our understanding of the society that created it. It is often assumed that during the Dark Ages society was put on hold and that the loss of literacy meant the loss of a civilized people. This artifact illustrates the contrary. New container shapes were constantly invented to suit the needs of a community that was continuously innovating and becoming more sophisticated. [2] The Greeks valued these advancements and adapted their material world to historic and social changes. Objects like this box point to a collective desire to evolve and a refusal to be satisfied with the status quo. While Dark Age society may remain partly a mystery to modern viewers, objects like this reveal a society unsatisfied with the old and constantly striving for new.

[2] John Boardman, *Greek art*, (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1996), 36.

Kylix: eye–cup (drinking cup)
ca. 530 B.C, (09.221.39)
(*Photo: The Metropolitan Museum of Art*)
This kylix cup is made of terracotta and designed for drinking alcohol. Specifically, the kylix sup was used at symposiums, party-like gathering of Greek aristocrats. Sharing similarities with the later French salon or English coffee house, the Greek symposium was an event where the elite could drink and converse together on politics and current affairs. This artifact remains a symbol of symposium culture and the importance of these social gatherings in Greek society. The two eyes that decorate the cup allow the cup to function as a mask when held to the face, investing the cup with the ability to project an alternate reality, just like the alcohol it would have contained. The sense of alternate reality conveyed by the masked and alcohol allowed elites to remove themselves from the general population in these private settings. At the same time, since symposiums were events where politics and social affairs were discussed with members beyond the family, they could be considered public affairs. The kylix, therefore, demonstrates the fusion of two distinct aspects of Greek society. The decoration and function of this cup thus challenges the stereotype that Ancient Greek society rarely mixed the public and private realms.[3]

Attic red-figure psykter
late 6th c. B.C., (20.00.78)
(*Photo:* State Hermitage Museum)

3 Anton Powell, *Greek World*, (London, GBR: Routledge, 1997), 435.

The patriarchal society of ancient Greece denied women a place outside of the *oikos*, household. Because of the absence of women in public life, it is often assumed that women depicted in Greek art were prostitutes. The following vase provides an alternative vision. It illustrates four women in a symposium scene, typically a male dominated gathering. The four women have assumed the position, location, and activities of elite men, while no men are present.[4] In Greek art, women at symposiums were *hetaira*, courtesans. Yet, these women are not in the presence of men, raising questions whether these women meant to represent *heteira*. Some critics suggest that these women are a source of comic warning, while others argue that they are Spartan women from a less reserved and gendered society.[5] Whether or not these women were Spartan, this vase does not provide evidence that they were *hetaira*. It is more likely that this vase served as a warning to society of the dangers of gender ambiguity and of allowing women the same rights as men. Here is a chance to re-think Greek conventions of female representation and question what was behind depictions of women in Greek art.

[4] Topper, *The imagery of the Athenian symposium*, 119.
[5] Topper, *The imagery of the Athenian symposium*, 120-121.

Classicists in Conversation: Interview Series

Professor Rose MacLean

University of California Santa Barbara

Interview by Brett Clapperton

BC: How did you get into Classics, or why did you choose this field?

BC: Starting with the hard one.

RM: It's a boring story because I started taking Latin in seventh grade because my mom told me that it was like figuring out a crossword puzzle and I really liked crossword puzzles. As soon as I started taking Latin in seventh, eighth grade I knew; and I don't think I even knew what a Classics professor was, but I sort of knew that I wanted to be a Classics professor and keep doing that. And so I just did. I started taking Greek in high school, and I was more interested in the literature. I remember the first time I read the *Aeneid* in Latin it was one of the most mind-blowing experiences I had had as a young student. Then when I went to college, I became more interested in the history part of things because I was inspired by one of my history professors.

BC: Which history professor?

RM: Her name is Roberta Stuart. She's at Dartmouth College and she works on slavery – ancient slavery. Her most recent book is on slavery in the plays of Plautus.

BC: Oh cool. Is there anyone else that you would say has really motivated your research or that you feel influenced by?

RM: Yes, I mean she was my main advisor, but all my teachers are Dartmouth. Then when I went to graduate school I wanted to work on freed slaves because I had been inspired by Roberta; and so I went to Princeton and I wanted to work with Brent Shaw, who has done a lot of important work on freed slaves but also Roman slavery in general and now is more into late antiquity. He is an amazing historian and a wonderful man. I wanted to go work with him. And he has obviously shaped my career up to this point. I was quite young.

BC: Any memories of graduate school?

RM: Any happy memories of graduate school [laughing]? Memories of graduate school…I remember when I started teaching. It was a big change for me because I went

to graduate school and I majored in Classics because I loved the topic and I wanted to study the topic, I wanted to learn more and write and do all the research part. But I didn't realize that there was going to be this teaching part of it as well. So when I started teaching as a graduate student, I really realized that the job includes both the research part and also interacting with students, being in a classroom, working through problems together, and I hadn't realized how fun that would be.

BC: So you enjoy it, that aspect?

RM: Yes, yeah!

BC: Because we have a lot of undergraduates here who are thinking about graduate school. Any advice for them?

RM: The advice I would give is the advice I was given, which is that if you can imagine yourself doing anything else besides going to graduate school and trying to be an academic, you should do that other thing. The reason is that it's very difficult. It's very difficult to get through graduate school. It's hard not to start making money really until you're twenty eight, twenty nine, thirty years old. And shaping your life around that way and then getting out of graduate school and having a PhD in a very difficult job market, trying to find a job that is going to sustain you. And normally you can't choose where you live after graduate school because you have to go where the job is. On the other hand, I graduated with my PhD and now I live in like the most beautiful place I have ever lived in southern California. There's like three beaches on campus.

BC: Wow! That's very different from here.

RM: It's very different, and I have incredible colleagues and so I got really lucky. So I would say at the same time, if you can't imagine yourself doing anything else, and that's what you really want, that's what you're really passionate about, then you should just go for it. Because I got lucky and it worked out and I have everything that I want now. That would be my advice. The other thing is there are a lot of things you can do with a PhD. So you can go and you can pursue a PhD, and that in itself can be gratifying. It's not like your life ends and it starts again when you leave graduate school. You continue to be a person and you continue to have experiences and learn new things. Even if I hadn't gotten so lucky, I wouldn't have felt like it was wasted or anything.

BC: Yes, that's good to hear, that you can still be a person.

RM: You know, I have friends that got married and had kids in graduate school, who traveled all over the place and you can get money from your graduate program to go to Turkey for a summer, or Greece.

BC: Any big research projects coming up?

RM: Well I'm just publishing my book—hopefully publish my book. You basically finish your dissertation and then you revise it and change it and it goes in different directions. And then you put your first book out, and that's the book that gets you tenure. I have a little side project I'm doing on the *Great Gatsby* and the author Petronius.

BC: That's really cool.

RM: So I've taught it first, and that's how I got interested in it, but a lot of people don't know that Fitzgerald was going to call the Great Gatsby *Trimalchio in West Egg*. It was almost named that, and then there's a mention of Trimalchio in the text when all the lights go off in Gatsby's house. Nick says something about his career as Trimalchio is over, but even beyond that, there's a lot of really interesting connections that you can draw. I was teaching a Latin literature class when I did it like for teaching purposes, but then I realized that it's a very interesting relationship between these two texts and how each one kind of represents – well how Petronius represents Neronian Rome and then how Fitzgerald obviously represents the Roaring Twenties and the changing morality of both periods.

BC: That's fascinating. We have a modern media class here, but I don't know if they've ever touched on that, so that's super interesting.

RM: It's fun because most people have read it, most people have read Gatsby and no one has read Petronius, like when you teach a big class of undergraduates. So they get really excited because they read it in high school and it's some people's favorite book, and then there's the movie. Working on something like that, but the freed men thing is my main thing.

BC: In the next five to ten years, do you have any major research plans?

RM: After I publish my book? I haven't really gotten there yet. I mean, I have some ideas. I'm really interested in not just how freed men communicated through inscriptions but how the medium itself shapes other ways of communicating, interacts with other ways of communicating. Maybe something like ancient communications and trying to learn some of the theories that people apply to the nature of communication in the media, and then taking that and bringing it back to antiquity. I might do something like that.

BC: Thank you so much!

Professor Eric Nelson

Pacific Lutheran University

Interview by Jemma Israelson

JI: When did you know you wanted to be a classicist?

EN: Well, that was actually kind of late. I started off as many students do, wanting to be something different than what I eventually became. I was a piano performance major when I entered university, and I wanted to be an architect, but I took originally a religion class in which I wanted to get into the discussion of topics. The background of one side of my family was very evangelical, so these kinds of issues were present for me. I wanted to be a little arguer and discuss with my professors, but they always kept saying: "Well in the Greek…it says..." and I thought after a semester or two of this, "Damn it –

JI: I'm gonna learn Greek! [Laughing]

EN: "… I'm gonna learn Greek!" I've always been fascinated in the genealogy of ideas. Where our ideas come from and the evidences for them and the kind of power the past exercises over us, particularly the pasts that we don't know. When I began to take Greek, all of a sudden a lot of this opened up to me, and I became really interested in the Hellenistic and early empire because my interests were primarily in the history of Christianity—*at first.* And now I am firmly ensconced in the pagan world. But, that's how I eventually got into that.

JI: It was in your undergrad when you discovered this?

EN: Yes, so it was kind of an identity crisis –

JI: *Identity crisis!*

EN: You know, during the junior year or so, but that really changed, it really opened me up as a person and it changed who I was.

JI: What's the best thing about being a classicist for you? Having all that background…

EN: [Laughing] Well, it's a double-edged sword. You find yourself constantly in positions where you wish to correct the kind of claims made around you, even sometimes by colleagues. So that is not always the most comfortable thing. On the other hand, you're very glad that you have that knowledge. One of the best things about being a classicist is that – this is probably true for everybody that gets really into a discipline –

you get to talk to all these other like-minded people and find out all of this crazy information, this crazy cool information about things that you really wonder about.

JI: Everybody has their very specific niche.

EN: I think Classics is particularly interesting because it is a part of so many things and it still has relevance.

EN: And it still has relevance! Particularly if you believe that the past is something worth really investigating for our present.

JI: What do you think its relevance is today?

EN: Well, I think there's so much relevance really. If you think about it, a lot of current disciplinary fascinations, whether it's gender studies, whether it's sexuality, whether it's urban planning, whether it's linguistics, philosophy. So many of these things have roots in the classical tradition, *but,* that tradition is being re-examined. While there is much of what we might think we know, all it takes is some enterprising student who comes at something in a different fashion and helps us to re-see the past – and then it has to be done. You really have a chance to be a revolutionary because you can affect the foundations upon which a lot of claims and ideas are made. At least that is my fantasy!
JI: I agree! What are some of your best and/or worst memories of graduate school?

EN: Oh gosh, I think the best memories of graduate school are going into graduate school and discovering that there were whole bunch of people like you. That is just one of the things that were terrific because all of a sudden you're surrounded by people who you don't bore talking about all of this arcane stuff.

JI: People still don't know what Classics is.

EN: Part of what's good with being a classicist though is that there's a certain amount of cultural caché. Latin, Greek, the ancient world, at the least in the United States there's a certain amount of anti-intellectualism. So on the one hand, you may be seen as irrelevant. But they're suspicious that somehow we must be very special in a way, or you might know something that they don't. There's a certain amount of caché, I found. That is kind of nice to have.

JI: What would your overall advice be for undergraduate students and for anyone thinking about career paths in Classics or in history?

EN: Well first you have to be – with the way that the job market is and everything else – you have to be stone cold sober about the kind of career and prospects that there are because you have to be just about completely drunk or stoned to go on, in that practical

vision. You really have to take a look at the possibilities. We had a position open in my university, a three-year visitor position. We had a hundred and sixty applications from all over the world and there's one person that gets it. That's very dispiriting, so going into academia is like acting: you try to dissuade talented people from doing it, and they just end up going ahead and doing it anyway. If you make it, it's one of the most terrific lives ever. You get to deal with young people all the time, new ideas, interesting people, fascinating colleagues, eccentrics of all kinds. You always get to do something that is of value.

JI: So why then did you choose to go into academia?

EN: I couldn't do anything else. Well, I *can* do many things. The other thing is that in a graduate program, all the way through, all of this is like a marathon. It doesn't matter how you're doing in any particular moment; it matters that you keep going and you finish. I've known so many people who are so crazy talented, but they just couldn't keep going.

JI: It's all of persistence.

EN: It's persistence and a lot of the succeeding is a lot talent. You have to have talent, but it's discipline and just being more stubborn than hell. Saying "I'm not going to quit this thing." My wife has a picture of this long road going into the distance, up a hill, a long, long hill, and on the road there's this little turtle looking up the road. And my wife always said that's what she felt like about half way through the dissertation. Looking up and thinking "*How* much farther do I have to go?" But the thing is the turtle reaches the top of the hill eventually and it keeps going. I'm not an inspirational speaker! [Laughing]

JI: That being said, what are a few of your proudest, professional accomplishments?

EN: Well, there's a couple. One so far is making a good argument that I have found an excerpt of a previously lost history and an author. I think that's the moment at which I realized that I think I knew where this piece came from and I knew who wrote it, it was electric. I wouldn't trade that for anything.

JI: It must be interesting using texts that haven't been widely translated by a lot of different people. It's an area of discovery.

EN: I think going back to the original texts holds the most satisfaction and promise. I think from our discussion today it's obvious that I need to go back and take a look at some of these texts because sometimes they're technical. So it seems to you a common word, but really within this other very esoteric or specialized discourse it has a specific meaning that you don't know.

JI: Who has influenced your research, either academically or otherwise?
EN: Name-wise, I think first of all Larry Bliquez. He was my dissertation adviser but very, very influential on my teaching and my research and approach to the discipline. That would probably be one of the major ones. On a larger scale, I would say, probably Philip Vanderan, Vivian Nutton, Heinrich Von Staden, and John Scarborough. As far as teaching me to write, my wife did that. She's a terrific writer, and she's a philosopher, writing arguments are philosophers' forte.

JI: We just heard about it now, but could you briefly outline your current research project?

EN: My current research project is to investigate the formation of the early Hippocratic corpus, and by early I mean third century BCE to second century AD. From that research, to develop a theory of corpus formation that helps to explain not only the Hippocratic corpus but the way other literary corpora formed.

JI: Is there anything specific that you would like to achieve in your career?

EN: Well, I would like to get this book out. I would be thrilled – I think one always would – if a couple of terms and concepts that I –

JI: To coin something.

EN: Yes, to coin. That would be cool. In our world, that's pretty cool. If you have something that people adopt, something like synthetic author. I wouldn't want to try to do that at the expense of having a sound idea, but having a sound idea that gets adopted and talked about by other people is pretty special.

JI: Awesome. Thank you *so* much for taking the time.

EN: Well thank *you*! It's fun to be able to talk about it.

Professor Josiah Ober

Stanford University

Interview by Brett Clapperton

BC: The first question is really about the keynote address. I unfortunately did not get to see most of it because I were all in the back, but that must have gone great, I assume it all went really well?

JO: I certainly enjoyed giving it, it was based on a book that is going to be coming out with Princeton University Press in April. It was on a set of ideas I have been thinking about for a long time, drawing on some work I have been doing and some of my colleagues at Stanford have been doing. Basically we can now show that the Greek world did have sustained economic growth for several hundred years in a highly decentralized world with city states. It's often been said that the only way you could really have sustained growth is by central organisation, and so the question is how did they do it? And so it is fun trying to work out the answer to that.

BC: So is that your main area of focus for your research, or where would you see it going in the next few years?

JO:That project is going to be done, I think, I will have said pretty much all I have to say about on the question of economic growth and its relationship to politics and to certain kinds of political institutions, political culture. What I'm trying to do next is write a book with the tentative title of "Democracy before Liberalism" about how democracy worked in classical antiquity, but not as a work of ancient history, but rather as a work of political philosophy. It's meant to be a general theory of what democracy looks like if you just think about it as citizen self-governance instead of thinking about it in terms of human rights. I think today we tend to bring together the idea of democracy as self-governance with an idea of democracy as supporting human rights.

BC: Yes, exactly, we have got the modern connotations attached to the word.

JO: Yes, it's very reasonably that we think about that way, obviously rights are hugely important, but I think that because we tend to create a hybrid of democracy plus rights, it's harder for us to think about what democracy without rights looks like. The danger, I think, is that we begin to think that democracy is a problem, rights is what we want, and maybe we could do without the democracy if we had some other way to guarantee that we keep our rights, which I tend to think is a dangerous conception basically because I think that rights won't be robustly supported unless there is some enforcement mechanism. I think ultimately the enforcement mechanism has got to be collective action

[...] by many people who act to protect rights. I think the only way to create that large scale collective action without strange forms ideology and propaganda is through a form of democracy. I think that the idea that democracy is really a necessary foundation for a robust and sustainable system of rights requires that we get clear about what democracy is before we import rights into the story.

BC: Wow, that's really interesting! So you're working on that book right now, or that's a future research project?

JO: I'm working on that now—in fact I was supposed to have done that all last year. I had a leave from Stanford, a sabbatical leave, and I had announced that was going to be the work I was going to work on. It was just one of those things. I had started a year ago last summer looking forward to my leave and I thought, 'well maybe I just have this little project' - I had promised to do a little small book on Greek History - and I just thought, 'I'll just take a few weeks off and throw that together, small little book over the summer' I had a few ideas here and there. Then when I started getting into it, I realized it was a much bigger book. So here it is fourteen months later and the book is done, but it was meant to be done in about two months and it took fourteen. But I have been making some progress on the other, thinking through the basic ideas and doing some background reading and I'm hoping I'll be able to make some progress.

BC: So what originally got you into Classics?

JO: Well it was really a mistake.

BC: I find that is how it happens with most people.

JO: I think that's right. Back in the day I suppose people were raised in families in which knowledge of Greek and Latin was just assumed, but that's not very common anymore. So when I started college –I had not been a very dedicated high school student, many other things interested me than proper academics – I sort of went to college as a second thought. It seems odd now, everybody spends all this time –

BC: Planning and thinking about it since they were 12! [Laughing]

JO: Exactly! But you know I was raised in Minneapolis, and I kept good enough grades and so on to get into University of Minnesota. At the last minute I decided to sign up for some classes and my first term there was pretty random, I didn't do very much. But in my second term, I took a class in Greek history and it was just one of those things, like falling in love.

BC: Or the light bulb goes on.

JO: Yeah, the light bulb goes on. The guy who ran it was Thomas Kelly, was a really severe sort of guy. You have to imagine the 1970s and you know I had hair down to the middle of my chest and all the apparatus like that and then here is this guy with his crew cut and dressed all severely and doesn't take any gruff from any students. Then I thought, how interesting, he really is serious! And he delivered these lectures, not fancy lectures, he didn't go in for a lot of bells and whistle. It's just his clear passion for it. Just as if this is the most important thing in the world and if you don't get it then here is the door because this really is the most interesting subject you could possibly study. So I just got hooked; it really was just as he was presenting it. I went into his office at the end of the term and went 'Professor Kelly, I've decided I just would like to be like you, a professor of Greek history' and he sort of looked me up and down, all scruffy and that, and said 'That's not going to happen!' [laughing] You know, he wasn't one of these friendly, Mr. Chips kinds of professors, 'no, just forget it,' he said, 'you're not willing to put the work in' and so I asked, 'Well, just in case I was, what would I have to do next?' 'You have to start learning Greek.' So I signed up for Greek and went from there. It was as I said, very much by accident, I think, as it is with many of us, just a matter of, without expecting it, falling in love with the whole way of thinking, way of doing history, way of the past, way of politics, economics, philosophy. All the things come together nicely studying Classics. So that's what got me into it.

BC: Well that's great! And clearly you've made a great career of it and it ended well!

JO: Well, I was pleased that I proved him wrong [laughing]. In fact, he retired some years ago and I was asked to give the lecture in honour of his career and his retirement. Of course I told the story, which he took very well indeed.

BC: It's a great story, but I think we'll have to end there as I think they are getting set up. Thank you.

Professor Kurt Raaflaub

Brown University

Interview by Clara Nencu

CN: Alright, so, the first question is why do you do classics?

KR: Why do I do classics? There's a very simple answer to that: I went to a classical high school and I loved the ancient languages and literatures and I loved history. So I decided to become a teacher. I thought not necessarily of university teaching, I thought of high school teaching, which in my country, Switzerland, was a perfectly normal thing to do. You got a PhD as a good end of your academic training and then you went to teach high school. So when it came to make decisions about my studies at university, I studied history and the ancient languages and literatures. Then I decided to write a PhD, and I combined my two main interests. So I became an ancient historian. That is a very simple answer to why I do what I do, but you want to know more than that.
Of course, once you get into a career, then you like what you do, then you continue to do it and you don't think necessarily whether what you do has immense social importance. But I confess to having thought occasionally– when I was student – whether there were perhaps areas of study which would be more meaningful or contribute more to benefit humanity. I thought of perhaps being a doctor and go into Africa and working there. In my mother's family there was a very strong streak of philanthropy in terms of service. But I decided that this is what I love to do and I am good at doing it. Actually, educating young people to make something meaningful out of their lives is an important contribution to society as well. And so I stuck with it. Why classics? That leads to a broader question, which you were probably going to ask me anyway. Why do we do classics today and what is the meaning of classics today? I think there are various answers one can give but if a parent asked me while I was teaching, "Why should my daughter or my son study classics and what can they do with it?" By that they often meant, "Why would they waste great opportunities to do something that would become more profitable in life?" My answer always was, "Your daughter or your son can do with classics whatever they want because they get an education of their mind. They learn something about historical developments, about humanity, about values, and they learn it in a field that is not easy. They learn to think, they learn to make arguments, and they learn to write. All these things are extremely useful for whatever you are going to do in life." To some extent a classics education is not a waste but it is a basic foundation for whatever you want to do later. In addition, in my view, the ancients in their literature remain so important to us, and perhaps more important than some other peoples' was, because the Greeks have a very uncanny tendency to pursue essential problems or dilemmas of human life and society. They follow these problems down deeper and deeper until they isolate what the real problem is, then they try to find answers to these. And that I think is why a poem like the *Iliad* remains fascinating to generation after generation or

tragedy to tragedy because they are more than literature. They are exploration of the human condition in a very essential way, and that I think makes Greek and, through the Greek, also Roman literature important and eternally important in the sense that every generation – every new generation – discovers itself in these dilemmas, in these problems, in these literary forms that the Greeks have left to us. That makes it valuable as an educational tool for every society and every generation. So that was a long answer to your question.

CN: You've certainly answered a number of my questions; thank you. What is the best thing about being a classicist?

KR: I have to distinguish – what is the best thing about being a teacher or professor? Whatever you teach and whatever you do research in, you are able to do something that you love to do, that you find interesting and relevant. I compare that with many, many professional occupations where people do things and it gives them a living, but they don't do it with passion or they just do it because that's their job. We have the privilege that we can do something we find relevant, and we can specialize in it and we can teach it, so that's a very, very important thing.
I often had students – at Brown we have sort of an open door policy that means when we are in our office the door is open, students are encouraged to come at office hours, but they also sometimes just come in. Anyway, often students came and said, "We see you working all the time!" and that doesn't seem to be very attractive about a job that you work all the time. So I answered, "Yes, if you want to be successful in an academic career, you have to be ready to work hard." Especially at the beginning because you need to establish yourself and so on. But, where do you find the profession where 90% to 95% of what you do, you love to do. That is the attraction of being an academic, a classicist. If you are capable and able and have the opportunity to work in a field that you really like and are interested in, then to be a professor – teaching students, doing research – in your chosen field is an immense pleasure and privilege.

CN: On this note, what would be your overall line of advice for undergraduate students who are still trying to find a career for themselves, specifically in the classics and history in general?

KR: It has become more difficult than it used to be when I was a student. I never even wondered whether I would find job or be able to pursue a career. We just took it for granted, and it was essentially so, because at the time universities expanded. There were more jobs, new jobs and so on. That's no longer the case. It's harder, the career path is more difficult because you have to move – usually you have to move from one year jobs to one year jobs to perhaps a two year job until you have enough experience and perhaps get into a tenure track job and so on. But, the good people, the dedicated, devoted people still make it and have their career. So my advice would be, if this is what you love to do and this is what you feel passionate about, then go for it, do the best you can, and it will

work out. It will not be easy, but it will work out. Do what you love to do, whatever you do, it doesn't have to be classics. Do it with passion and commitment, and do it well, and then you will succeed. So that's my advice.

CN: I think that's sound advice, for any aspiring professor, for anyone thinking about graduate school.

KR: I talked yesterday with an undergraduate who said, "You know, my mother says what you are saying, but my friends are saying: 'You have to get a job and earn a lot of money'." I say, "Money doesn't make you happy." If your priority in life is to drive a Ferrari and have glamorous girlfriends, then classics is not, or academics, is not the way you want to go. But if you want to have a satisfied, happy life and feel that you are doing something meaningful , and you will still earn enough to have a good life, even though not a luxurious or an abundant life. That's, I think, a simple fact. You have to choose what you want. What is a priority for you? If making money is a priority, then go somewhere else, but if it's being happy and having a good life and an interesting life, then that's a good option. That's my response to that.

CN: What are some of your proudest professional accomplishments?

KR: Because academic life is a life with quite a lot of freedom –you are constrained by teaching needs of the university and the department, and so there are lots of constraints – essentially you are free in part of your life [research] to do things that you like to do. So, you can make choices about what you work on and what you do research on. I think if I look back I would say I have been able in a number of ways to identify issues or periods or historical problems that were under-researched, and to provide impulses to get those more into the mainstream.
One example would be, it was mentioned today by Griet[6] in her lecture, the struggle of the orders, early Roman history, social conflicts. At the time when I started out as an assistant professor at Brown, this was a very under-researched field. It was dominated by legal historians who looked at everything from the perspective of legal regulations. So I organized a series of workshops and published a volume and that volume had a serious impact in stimulating people to do research on that area. By now, it has become much better known and better understood. Or thinking of this global antiquities network here, ten years ago, by now fifteen years ago, I took a program at Brown that was simply called "Ancient Studies," the purpose of which was to bring together people who do work on earlier societies and to make them know each other, create a virtual space where we could talk with each other, where we perhaps could collaborate with each other. We organized workshops on what we were doing so that other people would know about it and this developed into a program where we had an undergraduate major. We did seminars every year – a seminar on an interesting topic that we pursued as many ancient societies as we

[6]Griet Vankeerberghen, Professor of History at McGill University.

could. For example, the issue of *War and Peace*: how did early societies react to this common challenge of every society, and what were the different answers? We organized a seminar in which students chose a society, so early China, or Japan, or Greece, or let's say the Inca or the Aztecs in early America. We would work on establishing a common catalogue of questions, and the students would then seek for answers in their society, and give presentations in the second half of the seminar trying to answer these questions. While in the first part of the seminar we would go a little deeper with Greece and Rome, which I knew best and we have most evidence and so on, so we could have some detailed discussions there. And then eventually I developed it even further so that by the end of the semester we had a conference where we got in the experts who would then talk on the issues with which we had been grappling throughout the whole semester. For the students that was a wonderful experience. I edited those volumes, published them. I did global antiquity before its name.

CN: Were these annual seminars?

KR: They were every year and we had different topics. So one year it was *War and Peace*, the most recent I did was *Thinking, Recording, and Writing History* in the ancient world. Another one was *Society and Aliens* – foreigners – how did societies see themselves in the world and how did they see their relationship to other societies? One year it was on *Geography and Ethnography* in ancient societies and so on. We picked a topic that was promising every year, a different topic. I have published the whole series of these volumes on these things that I think at the time nobody did. So again I was giving an impulse for something new, a new direction, which by now has become much more fashionable. That was in 2000 before the Stanford people did their comparison of empires and of course before this network here came up, or before the Center for the Ancient World in New York at New York University was created, which does essentially what I did at Brown on a much smaller scale.
If you ask me what some of my proudest accomplishments are, I would say, in terms of scholarship, giving new impulses that were then picked up by all those that followed, by others, and became mainstream. Another thing of which I am very proud is that I have always been very interested in helping younger scholars, not only students, but also young scholars. I have a whole cohort of young scholars who are not my doctorate students, but in some ways or other I have helped, to assess their dissertation for publication, I wrote reviews for when they were applying for jobs and things like that. So I have a whole, large cohort of younger scholars whom I know, with whom I interact, who are friends by now and whose career I was able to influence in a positive way, which is not unique to me, but I always felt this was a particularly important aspect of my own career. It has something to do with my passion for teaching. Not only teaching students, but also coaching younger scholars and so on.

CN: So now that we have covered the past, let's move forward. What are your research goals in the coming five, ten years? Is there anything specific you would like to achieve in your career?

KR: The last twenty-five years – you're asking excellent questions by the way, you're very good. In the last twenty-five years of my career, I was always involved in what I call academic leadership, of one way or another, which took a lot of time. I was able to write articles, I have tons of articles and chapters and books and so on. I edited, for the reasons I explained to you, edited a whole lot of volumes, but I was never able really after my second book project, which is now a long time ago, to pursue major research projects of my own. I just didn't have the coherent amount of time you need to do this kind of thing. So my retirement now has given me the opportunity to do this, and one of the main reasons why I wanted to retire was to have time to finally do my major projects.

I have two that are most urgent for me right now. I'm editing a Landmark series. I don't know whether you know the Landmark series? It's a series of user friendly translations of ancient historical authors, like Thucydides, Herodotus. I'm doing one of the works of Julius Caesar, and it is user friendly because it is printed in a larger font; it has space in the margins where you can scribble something; it has the footnotes right at the bottom of the page, not somewhere in the back. It has maps every few pages, not just two maps and a thousand names in the back, and so on. It's really something that has become very popular: students love it, teachers love it. It's the brain child of an engineer, a hobby ancient historian, and I am doing one with all the works of Julius Caesar, which I hope will bring Caesar back into the mainstream of public interest, not essentially as a military historian, but as an interested cultural figure. So that's one thing, and that will be done by next year.

And the other project is on early Greek political thinking. That is, how did political thinking emerge among the Greeks, and how is that related to other forms of political thinking in the ancient world. First looking in the orbit where the Greeks moved, I mean to the ancient near East and the eastern Mediterranean, but I will have a final chapter in which I compare early Greek political thinking with early Chinese political thinking because one can do very interesting things actually and comparison will help to make it clear and give more profile to the specifics of each society's developments. These are my main projects that I have right now, apart from interests in the social dimensions of ancient war. I have developed an interest in war and the home front in antiquity, which is again an under researched topic. So, I'm not going to run out of projects; I might run out of time at some point.

CN: Well that's certainly an influential project, and I think it's going to be of interest to many. But I also wanted to know: who were your influences in terms of academic research or otherwise?

KR: Largely, my own doctoral advisor, his name is Christian Meier, who is a very, very interesting and path-breaking German ancient historian, who had a very strong interest in

theory as well as the practice of history. So he has certainly influenced me very importantly. Other than that I would find it difficult to identify individuals. You learn from many people, it's a constant process of learning.

CN: Yes.

KR: My classics teachers at the university in Switzerland where I studied or were… It is a miracle I became a classicist because the way they did classics was so boring and such a turn-off and so socially irrelevant because they were only interested in restoring the texts. They didn't think about the larger dimension, about what does the text mean to them and to us. That was not an issue. I told you the anecdote before, you know where my professor said, "Well if that's a problem to you then you are not in the right place." So they just took it for granted, and they were not interested in promoting their field or in thinking about what is important about it – they just did it. At the time, you still had captive audiences, your students still needed to take your courses because they wanted to be teachers in Latin and Greek, which was still commonly taught in high school at the time. They just could do what they wanted to do, and they didn't have to think about justifications and relevance and things like that.

CN: Since you brought up the subject of high school and your early career, what are some of your best and worst memories of graduate school? After you decided you wanted to go on with classics, what do you remember?

KR: Well, I think, you know this is no longer relevant because academic life has changed, and it was always different in this country. In Europe, at the time, universities were extremely hierarchical. The professors were up there, the students were down here. In Switzerland it was better than in Germany, but when I started my academic career in Germany, Berlin, after the first year, the chairmen of the department – the history department – said to me, "Oh, by the way, if you continue to talk so much with the students, you might never get to be a professor." He meant, "Don't waste your time with the students. Do your research and that will make your career." That was just totally opposite to what I was about because I was about being a teacher, and I could anytime have returned to teaching high schools and it would have been fine. I was happy doing it. I missed doing research – if you teach twenty five hours per week you can't do much research. I had written a dissertation, I had loved my research, and so I was looking for a job or career in which I could combine the two and that's what university teaching is about. I always felt I was a teacher, and in German, a professor is a high school teacher. High school in Germany means university, okay? So a *Hochschullehrer*, a high school teacher, is a professor at the university.

CN: Ah, okay.

KR: But despite that, teaching didn't matter for them. What mattered was your research, that was what made your career. To some extent, this is true everywhere, but it's much less the case in this country, particularly not at the university where I taught for thirty five years – Brown University – where teaching is taken very seriously. You cannot get a tenured position unless you are at least a decent, if not a really good and committed teacher. And that's what corresponded to my values, and that's why I felt very comfortable there.
So, if you asked for worst experiences, I would say the confrontation with a university system in which these values were not established. They were not taken seriously. The best is that you always found very interesting friends and even among the professors, always found interesting people. Some of my very best friends still, not from graduate school so much, are from when I was an assistant professor. My colleagues at the University of Berlin were just absolutely wonderful people with whom I am still very, very close friends. So it's what you make of life and not what others want to make you. That's the important thing. Ok?

CN: Okay. So let's end it on that note. Thank you very much.

KR: You are most welcome.

Steps and Waters

JEMMA ELLIOTT-ISRAELSON

M O T O R B O A T S

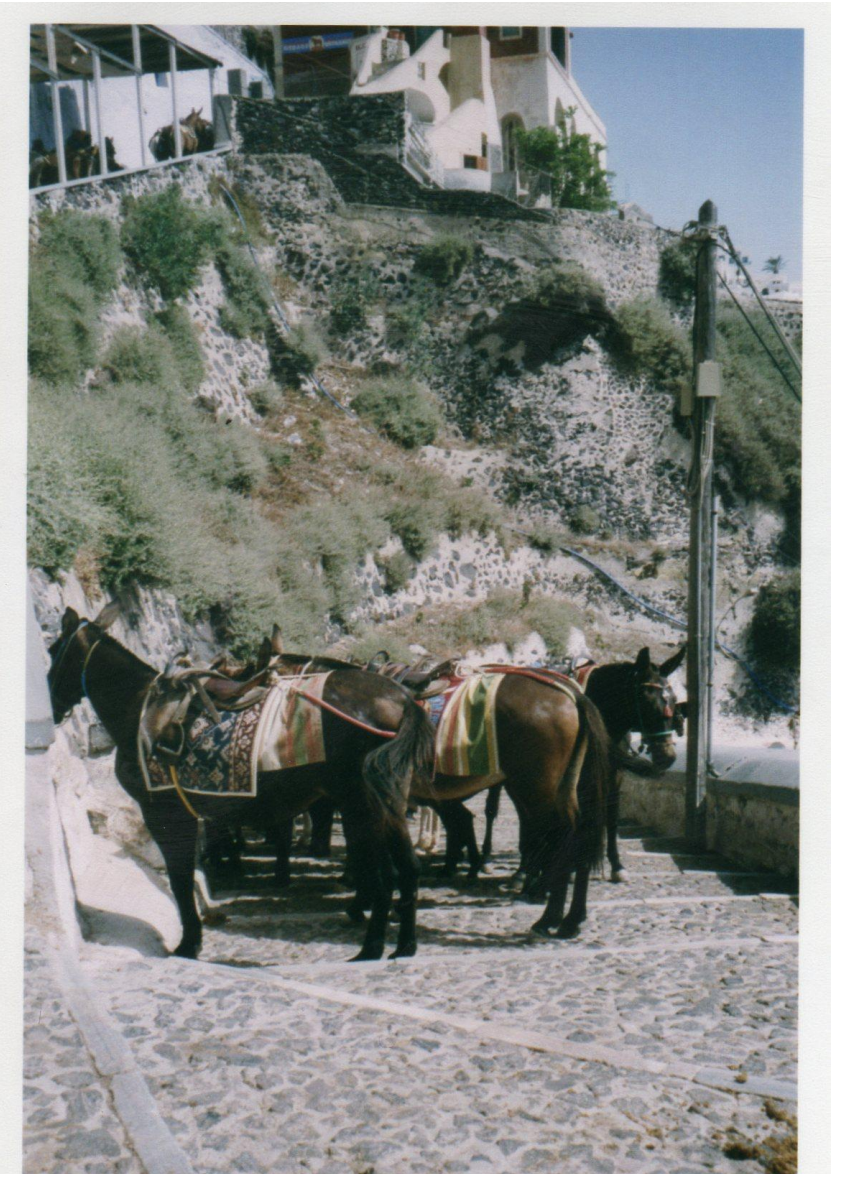
This photograph was taken in Venice on the Rialto Bridge. The area used to be home to the largest market in Venice in the high renaissance, with the Fondaco dei Tedeschi on the right side. Much of the original architecture of the surrounding buildings remain intact.

* All photographs were taken on 35mm film

M E D I T E R R A N E A N

This is the island of Thera, just off of Santorini. The island is home to a volcano which erupted in around 1500 BCE resulting in the plethora of islands now found in the Aegean and Mediterranean seas.

M U L E S



Donkeys are the traditional transport mechanism on many greek islands, including Santorini, where this was taken. For 10 euro, tourists can be escorted on these study steeds down to the port and back up again, getting flavour of traditional Greek island life.