Extract from James Whitley, *The Archaeology of Ancient Greece*, Cambridge University Press 2001, pp. 36-41 (on the methods pioneered by Beazley in the imaginative reconstructive of the 'history' of Greek vase painting)

2.7 Beazley and the re-formation of the Hellenic ideal

Of all the foreign nationalities who worked in Greece, the British had been least inclined to adopt the German model. In Britain the tradition of the amateur gentleman scholar had lived on. The British preferred to work on smaller sites and in smaller teams. The only 'big dig' undertaken by the British School, Sparta (Knossos being the private preserve of Sir Arthur Evans), was, in comparison with French, German and American efforts, chaotic.[81] Nevertheless British Classical scholars could not fail to be impressed by German standards and German achievements. In the 1880s German scholars had made great strides forward in the study of Greek pottery. They had tried to isolate particular vase painters on the basis of signatures, or rather painted labels which told us such facts as 'Amasis made me' (*Amasis mepoiesen*) or 'Exekias drew me' (*Exekias megraphsen*). From 1900 onwards A. Furtwängler and K. Reichhold embarked on a lavish publication of the

[79] Wrede *et al.* 1937: 1–5.

[80] Lord 1947: 177–8: 200–2, 231–45; Morris 1994a: 34–5. On Rockefeller's donation, see Lord 1947: 255. For an account of the Agora excavations generally, see Camp 1992. In order to accommodate the volume of material uncovered by the Agora excavations, the Americans began to publish a new annual archaeological journal, *Hesperia*.

[81] The majority of the results of the extensive excavations in Sparta have only ever been published as articles in the *Annual of the British School at Athens*. Apart from the report on the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia (Dawkins 1929), no other final reports have ever seen the light of day.

most celebrated Greek vases, Furtwängler writing the text and Reichhold drawing the pictures.[82] It was this publication that impressed one British scholar in particular, J.D. Beazley.

J.D. Beazley (1885–1970) devoted his life to the study of Greek vases, principally vases from Attica (the territory of ancient Athens).[83] He attempted to isolate – and in his eyes and in the eyes of most of his contemporaries he succeeded in isolating – the individual hands of the painters of these pots. Beazley did not, for the most part, work with pots from known contexts in Athens itself. The bulk of Greek pottery had been found in Italy, and came mostly from hastily excavated Etruscan graves. These vases were now scattered throughout the major museums of Europe and America. Beazley's identification of hands and workshops relied upon a new approach derived from the study of the Italian Renaissance, called Morellian connoisseurship. Giovanni Morelli had argued that it is possible to identify and group the works of an individual painter through the isolation of that painter's style.[84] Style – or as Beazley put it 'a peculiar system of renderings through which a certain conception of the human form found expression'[85] – cannot be grasped through the study of signatures, or by appraising the overall effect of the work, or looking only at larger features such as its composition or iconography. Such things can be imitated. Individual style is apparent most clearly in those apparently unconscious tricks of draughtsmanship used in the rendering of the smaller parts of the human anatomy, that is in the drawing of eyes, noses, ears, hands and feet. It is on the attention to such apparently insignificant details that the isolation of individual style depends. Carlo Ginzburg has argued that this attention to 'significant details', details more likely to have been unconsciously produced than consciously intended, is part of a new paradigm in the historical sciences that crystallised in the late nineteenth century.[86] It is at this time that the 'science' of graphology is invented and detective fiction appears. Sherlock Holmes is only the most famous fictional character whose application of deductive logic and attention to apparently minor facts leads him, inexorably, to the truth. In such stories criminals, in a sense, betray themselves by leaving unconscious clues behind, clues which eventually lead to the identification of the personality of the perpetrator.[87]

Whether or not Beazley was consciously aware of these influences is unimportant. His advocacy came through example, not through manifesto. His breakthrough came in the isolation of painters who had left no signatures. His articles on the Berlin painter (named after a vase in Berlin (fig. 11.12)) and the Kleophrades painter (named after a potter with whom the painter seemed to have worked (fig 9.6)) established his method.[88] Beazley was eventually to attribute about one-third

[82] Furtwängler and Reichhold 1900. For earlier German work, see Cook 1972: 298–9, 316–27.
[83] For Beazley's life, see Ashmole 1970. For his Oxford context, see Boardman 1985b.
[84] Morelli 1892. On Morelli's influence on Beazley, see Kurtz 1985a; Beazley and Kurtz 1983: 11–47; Whitley 1997a. [85] Beazley 1922: 90. [86] Ginzburg 1990.
[87] Ginzburg 1990; see also Shanks 1995: 37–41. [88] Beazley 1911; 1918; 1922.

of all known Attic pots (which can be numbered in the tens of thousands) to particular hands or workshops, which were published as lists called *Attic Black-Figure Vase Painters* and *Attic Red-Figure Vase Painters*.[89] These books trace the influence of 'Master' painters from one generation to the next. Beazley tended to employ a hierarchical terminology to describe the relationship between painters, schools and workshops: 'I make a distinction between a vase by a painter and a vase in his manner; and that "manner", "imitation", "following", "school", "circle", "group", "influence", "kinship" are not, in my vocabulary, synonyms.'[90] This is a very similar terminology to the one that had been used to describe the workshop practice of the Italian Renaissance. It is an analogy that runs through Beazley's work. In trying to sum up the differences between the Berlin painter and the Kleophrades painter, he says of the latter that 'he may be said to play a kind of Florentine to the Berlin painter's Sienese'.[91] Such remarks are by no means insignificant details. The Renaissance analogy gave coherence to his overall scheme for the development of Greek vase painting and, by extension, of Greek art. For Beazley managed to reconcile three main strands in Classical archaeological thought: a humanism derived from Renaissance scholarship that sought to find the individual behind the work of art; the 'scientific' practice of archaeological philology with its scrupulous attention to detail; and Winckelmann's conjectural scheme, which outlined the growth of Greek art from primitive beginnings in the Archaic, to a high point in the Classical and then decline in the Hellenistic. Beazley's lists demonstrated that the development of Greek art was not an impersonal process of stylistic evolution, but depended crucially on individuals working within a tradition and passing on their skills from master to pupil. In this light the Greek miracle, the achievement of a fully naturalistic artistic idiom, came to resemble the Italian Renaissance.

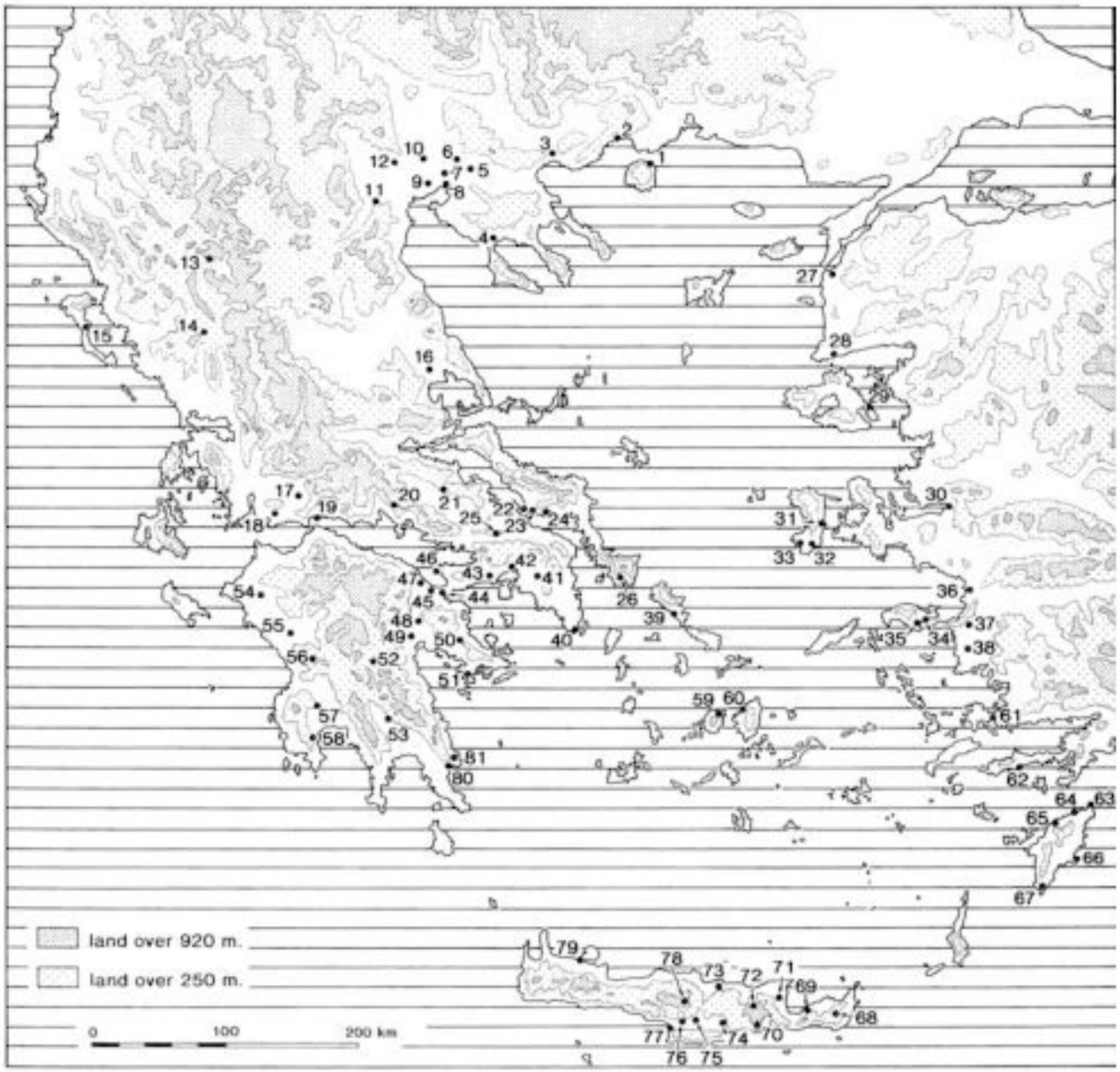
Though Beazley's method was new, the ideas that gave coherence and structure to his lists were not. It is possible, on reading or using Beazley, still to believe in the uniqueness of the Greek achievement, to suppose that the Greeks had attained artistic standards of universal validity. The problems of historicism, cultural relativism or hermeneutics can be sidestepped. The beliefs of Romantic German Hellenism could be supported by the authority of scientific fact. Positivism could, at last, be seen to serve a purpose.[92] To be sure, Beazley identified the high point in Greek art earlier than had Winckelmann – the painters he most highly esteemed he placed in the late Archaic or early Classical.[93] This was to locate the pinnacle of vase painting earlier than the pinnacle of achievement in sculpture, an anomaly that could be explained away by saying that, from the 480s onwards, wall painting became the principal vehicle for non-sculptural artistic achievement. In this way the metanarrative of Greek Classical Archaeology could be retained.[94]

[89] Beazley 1956; 1963. [90] Beazley 1956: x. [91] Beazley 1918: 40–1.
[92] As I argue in Whitley 1997a. [93] Beazley and Ashmole 1932: 29–32, 41–2.
[94] For metanarratives, see Shanks 1995: 53–91; Morris 1994a; Whitley 1997a.

It is none the less important to emphasise that Beazley's approach was that of an archaeologist not an art historian. He examined every scrap of evidence, regardless of quality (to which, however, he was by no means indifferent).[95] Beazley indeed is the most influential Classical archaeologist of the twentieth century. His most positive legacy was the indirect inspiration he gave to several generations of British and American scholars to attempt archaeological synthesis on a grand scale. Gisela Richter's studies of Archaic sculpture, for example, manage to reconcile the isolation of individual hands with an overall scheme in which sculptors approach a Classical, naturalistic ideal, and Humfry Payne's *Necrocorinthia* remains fundamental to the study of Archaic Corinthian art.[96] However Beazley's example also had less positive effects. It became a truth universally acknowledged that a painter defined by Beazley was in need of a scholarly monograph. This species of monograph had many illustrations and numerous footnotes, but, with some honourable exceptions, possessed nothing approaching a serious academic argument.[97] In this particular academic genre, a painter's *œuvre* is sometimes fleshed out with pseudo-biographical details: 'Smikros wanted to sneak himself into this high-life circle where Euphronios excelled . . . Smikros may have succeeded in his social ambitions.'[98]

Excesses like this have led, inevitably, to a reaction. Critics of Beazley (or at least of 'Beazleyism') have appeared, most notably Michael Vickers and David Gill. Vickers and Gill have argued that it is wrong to think of vase painting as an art, and of vase painters as artists.[99] No famous potters are recorded in the literary sources. Vases have been valued as 'art objects' only because of d'Hancarville, whose publication of Hamilton's collection was a 'marketing ploy' designed to increase its value.[100] They point out that vessels in gold, silver and bronze were always most highly valued in antiquity, and gold vessels were several thousand times more expensive than pots. Pottery was in comparison ridiculously cheap. Since pottery tends to survive, whereas most valuable metal vessels have been melted down, pots have assumed an importance they do not merit.[101] 'Trade' in pottery, in Gill's eyes, is an insignificant by-product of other kinds of economic and cultural exchange.[102] Vickers has gone further. Since pots are cheaper than metal vessels, potting and pot painting must be consider the humbler craft.[103] It is a universal law of human culture that humbler crafts will take their cue from major arts – in this case metalworking. Pots are, for the most part, skeuomorphs,

[95] Boardman 1978: 8; see also Robertson 1985.
[96] Richter 1968; 1970; Payne 1931. Other scholars who benefited from Beazley's inspiration were Desborough (1952), on Protogeometric pottery, and Jeffery (1990) on Archaic inscriptions. Beazley's indirect influence has been far more fruitful than the emulation he has inspired amongst students of 'vase painting'.
[97] One honourable exception being Burn 1987. See also Whitley 1997a: 44–5.
[98] Frel 1983: 150. [99] Vickers 1985; Vickers and Gill 1994.
[100] Vickers and Gill 1994: 1–32; Vickers 1987. For a different view, see Jenkins and Sloan 1996: 40–64.
[101] Vickers and Gill 1994: 33–76; Vickers 1990. [102] Gill 1988a; 1988b; 1994.
[103] Vickers 1985; Vickers and Gill 1994: 105–204; Gill and Vickers 1990.



1. Thasos town
2. Kavala
3. Amphipolis
4. Olynthos
5. Langadas
6. Assiros
7. Derveni
8. Thessaloniki
9. Sindos
10. Kastanas
11. Vergina
12. Pella
13. Vitsa Zagoriou
14. Dodona
15. Kerkyra (town)
16. Pherai
17. Thermon
18. Kalydon
19. Naupaktos
20. Delphi
21. Kalapodhi
22. Chalkis
23. Lefkandi
24. Eretria
25. Thebes
26. Karystos
27. Troy
28. Assos
29. Mytilene
30. Smyrna
31. Chios town
32. Emborio
33. Kato Phana
34. Samos (town)
35. Samos (Heraion)
36. Ephesos
37. Priene
38. Miletos
39. Zagora on Andros
40. Sounion
41. Athens
42. Eleusis
43. Megara
44. Isthmia
45. Corinth
46. Perachora
47. Sikyon
48. Mycenae
49. Argos
50. Epidauros (sanctuary of Asklepios)
51. Halieis
52. Tegea
53. Sparta
54. Elis
55. Olympia
56. Bassai (Phigeleia)
57. Messene (Ithome)
58. Nichoria
59. Paros, Koukounaries
60. Naxos, Grotta
61. Halikarnassos
62. Knidos
63. Rhodes town
64. Ialysos
65. Kameiros
66. Lindos
67. Vroulia
68. Praisos
69. Kavousi
70. Kato Symi
71. Dreros
72. Karphi
73. Knossos
74. Afrati
75. Phaistos
76. Gortyn
77. Kommos
78. Idaean Cave
79. Kydonia
80. Epidauros Limera
81. Zarax

2.3 Map of Greece, showing major sites

their shapes taken from metal prototypes. Further, figured gold appliqué decoration found on silver vessels in some Bulgarian tombs must provide the prototype for the technique of red-figure, if we allow that much of the silver would have been tarnished almost to blackness.[104] Like many Classical scholars, Vickers is a literary platonist, for whom the red-figured pots surviving in the archaeological record are but shadowy copies of the true metal vessels, now lost from the material world and accessible to us only through the close reading of ancient authors.

It may seem odd to end this chapter with a summary of what, in other archaeologies, must seem a minor controversy. In this field, however, Vickers' criticisms are far from unimportant. In criticising Beazley the traditional practice of the whole of the subject is threatened. The 'Vickers' controversy is symptomatic of wider changes taking place within the Classical Archaeology of Greece. Classical Archaeology began as the antiquarian study of works of art thought to be both ancient and Greek. When national museums were created, and 'vases' joined sculpture as examples of ancient art, collecting such examples became a matter of social and national prestige. Winckelmann provided a conjectural history of this art, which later German scholars were to fill out with empirical facts. It was the Germans who turned Classic Archaeology into a discipline, into the material arm of an overall 'science of antiquity' devoted, almost exclusively to the Greek and Roman past; and it was Germans who directed the tools of philological scholarship to hitherto neglected areas of the material record. Beazley managed, for a time, to unite these various strands and so to produce a distinctly 'Hellenic' archaeology. He, more than any other scholar, has shaped the discipline in the twentieth century. But, in developing primarily as a branch of Classical philology, Greek archaeology has found itself isolated in the field of archaeology as a whole, an isolation which Beazley's temporary success has reinforced. It is this sense of isolation, and in particular a feeling of distance from the anthropological and evolutionist roots of other archaeologies, that has been the proximate cause for the appearance of what may be called dissident Classical archaeologies in Hamburg, Paris, Naples and Cambridge.[105] It is this very same feeling that has also encouraged the importation of techniques of field survey into Greek archaeology. Of all the new methodologies, field survey has had the biggest impact in recent years. It would be wrong, however, to see field survey as a largely extraneous approach. It has its own history.

[104] Vickers 1985. For criticisms, see Boardman 1987; Robertson 1985.

[105] Separate 'schools' of dissenting Classical Archaeology have emerged in all these places. Herbert Hoffmann has founded the journal *Hephaistos*, which is based in Hamburg; Bruno d'Agostino and Anna Maria D'Onofrio have been instrumental in creating a distinctive Italian school in Naples, whose discussions are published in *Annali di Archeologia e Storia Antica*; the Paris 'school' is best represented by the work of Alain Schnapp and F. de Polignac, and is shown to its best advantage in Bérard *et al.* 1989.