"WHEN I WAS YOUNG AND HE WAS OLD":
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF OVERLAP IN STRABO’S GEOGRAPHY

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The title of this article echoes a remark made by Strabo in connection with his youthful studies under his much-respected teacher, Aristodemus of Nysa. Aristodemus is one of several long-lived and eminent men with whom, Strabo tells us, he overlapped in his youth. In the first part of this article (“Longevity and Youth”), I analyse such overlaps on the premise that Strabo himself was well advanced in years (in the eighth or ninth decade of his life) by the time he wrote out the final manuscript of his Geography.¹ His comments should therefore be understood as the reflections and recollections of an elderly man.²

When Strabo records his youthful overlaps with aged individuals (long dead by the time of his writing), he combines his own longevity with theirs to create time spans of one hundred years or more.

The analysis presented in the first part of this article, “Longevity and Youth,” includes Strabo’s overlap with the aged Roman aristocrat P. Servilius Isauricus, and incidentally results in a slight recasting of Strabo’s personal past. It was suggested over a hundred years ago, on the basis of Strabo’s overlap with Isauricus, that Strabo must have been present in Rome in, or before, 44; and Strabo’s visit or sojourn in Rome at this date has been frequently stated as fact in the secondary literature.³ Recently, some scholars have questioned the validity of such a deduction.⁴ I look at inscriptional evidence which suggests that Strabo’s overlap with Isauricus need not imply Strabo’s presence in Rome, and that it may have occurred in Asia.

In the second part of this article, “Dating the Overlaps,” I look at how Strabo’s overlaps themselves overlap with each other to present a cohesive picture of Strabo’s youth. Strabo’s biographical details will doubtless remain controversial.

I would like to dedicate this article to Professor T. D. Barnes, who retired in 2007 after some forty years of teaching at the University of Toronto. A colloquium held in his honour stimulated me to develop further some ideas originally presented at the 2005 CAC meeting in Banff, Alberta, and this article is the result.

¹ However much time Strabo spent on research and preparation for his work, the years 17–23 C.E. provide the temporal viewpoint of the finished product: Potheacary 2002.
² Strabo was born probably at some point in the years following the Roman conquest (64/63) and assimilation of the kingdom of Pontus: Potheacary 1997; DNP s.v. “Strabon.” Unless otherwise noted, all dates are B.C.E.
³ Pais 1908: 410–411 (somewhat tentative); Honigmann 1931: 80, 82; OCD²; Bowersock 2000: 19. See also the works cited in Engels 1999: 26, n. 39 (but Engels himself is doubtful).
⁴ Clarke (1997: 101) is justifiably circumspect, as is Engels (see above, n. 3). Dueck (2000: 85) notes the deductive nature of the claim but thinks it plausible.
but I hope at least to overturn some of the false certainties surrounding his early life. In truth, the major benefit to be gained from studying the overlaps is less in what they tell us about Strabo’s younger years and more in what his inclusion of them tells us about his attitudes and orientation. By viewing time through the prism of his own experience, Strabo personalises the past and humanises history, his old age making him a special witness to what were, after all, tumultuous times.

I. LONGEVITY AND YOUTH

Strabo mentions his overlap with Aristodemus in the part of the Geography where he describes the city of Nysa in Roman Asia. Nysa boasted a number of famous citizens, including:

Μενεκράτης, Ἀριστάρχου μαθητής, καὶ Ἀριστόδημος ἐκείνου υἱός, οὗ διηκούσαμεν, ἡμεῖς ἐχτατόγνωρ νεότα παντελῶς ἐν τῇ Νύσῃ

Menecrates (a pupil of Aristarchus) and Aristodemus (Menecrates’ son), under whom I studied, though he was extremely old, for the whole period of my youth in Nysa.

(Str. 650 C, lines 25–27)

When referring elsewhere to his education, Strabo uses the verb ἄκροαόμει (“to study under,” “attend the lectures of”) rather than the verb διωκόμει that he uses in connection with Aristodemus. Strabo mentions, for example, Xenarchus ὁ ἡκροσσάμεθα ἡμεῖς (670 C, line 25) and Tyrannio ὁ ἡμεῖς ἡκροσσάμεθα (548 C, line 14). Neither of these individuals taught Strabo at home in Nysa. As Strabo notes, Xenarchus lived in four different places (Seleucia-in-Cilicia, Alexandria, Athens, and Rome).

These places were the great centres of learning of their day. For a youth of Strabo’s background and social milieu, a move to one or more of them marked the more advanced stages of education. Strabo’s studies abroad (under Xenarchus, Tyrannio, and probably others) can be assumed to represent elements of what we would call his tertiary (or university level) education.

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5 Strabo, when making self-references, commonly uses the first person plural verb form and the correspondingly plural forms of adjectives and pronouns.

6 I take the adverb παντελῶς as qualifying the adjective νέοι: LSJ s.v. παντελῆς iii. Jones (1917–32: 6.263) takes it with διηκούσαμεν (“whose entire course ... I ... took at Nysa”). See below, 41, n. 12.

7 “C” page numbers are printed in the margins of the edition/translation of Strabo’s work by Jones (1917–32) and in the margins of the most recent edition by Radt (2002–), who also provides line numbers.

8 670 C, lines 25–27. Strabo does not say in which of these cities he studied under Xenarchus. It is generally assumed to have been Alexandria or Rome.

9 Tyrannio had been taken to Rome from Amisos as a war captive in 71. For his career, see Haas 1977: 90–96. Tyrannio’s presence in Rome is attested by Strabo (609 C, lines 16–19).
Strabo’s studies under Aristodemus, in contrast, represent the earlier (“secondary”) stage of his studies. The nature of Strabo’s education under Aristodemus is indicated by a remark that Strabo makes in praise of his teacher’s qualifications. He contrasts his teacher with two other γραμματικοί from Nysa, both of whom were related to Aristodemus and one of whom bore the same name. Strabo differentiates his mentor by stating:

ο δ’ ἡμέτερος καὶ ἐρρητόρευε, καὶ ἐν τῇ Ῥόδῳ καὶ ἐν τῇ πατρίδι δύο σχολὰς συνεῖχε, πρῶτοι μὲν τὴν ἡγετικήν, δεύτερας δὲ τὴν γραμματικήν. ἐν δὲ τῇ Ῥώμῃ τῶν Μάγγου παιδῶν ἐπιστατῶν ἥρκειτο τῇ γραμματική σχολῇ

My Aristodemus additionally taught rhetoric. In Rhodes and in his home city, he ran two schools: a school of rhetoric in the morning and a grammar school later in the day. In Rome, where he had the oversight of the sons of Magnus [= Pompey the Great], Aristodemus contented himself with grammar schooling. (Str. 650 C, lines 29–32)

Strabo is obviously proud of his Aristodemus’ ability to teach rhetoric, which represented an advance on grammatical teaching. It seems very likely, then, that Strabo studied at both the grammatical and rhetorical level under Aristodemus. His basic grammatical education, if it followed traditional norms, might be expected to have lasted around five years. The addition of a rhetorical education would have extended that period by perhaps another two years. Thus, Strabo will have been under Aristodemus’ tutelage from approximately eleven or twelve years of age to the age of eighteen or thereabouts. Strabo’s use (650 C, line 26) of διακοφώ (in contrast to ἀκροφώμια) is significant, the prefix δια—suggesting that Strabo’s education at the hands of Aristodemus was prolonged. The same sense of long duration probably underlies Strabo’s use (650 C, line 27) of παντελῶς in the phrase νέοι παντελῶς ἐν τῇ Νύσῃ. Strabo’s overlap with Aristodemus was an extended one.

Aristodemus was clearly an eminent scholar. His fame, however, is not the point, or at least not the sole point, of Strabo’s reference. Strabo’s longevity

10Teachers at the grammatical level were called γραμματικοί. Some γραμματικοί, however, combined teaching at this level with teaching more advanced subjects, as was the case with Aristodemus and Tyrannio (see below, 49, n. 53). Bonner (1977: 48–58) and Morgan (1998: 155–156) discuss the development of the term γραμματικό. I would like to thank Nicole Pétrin for helpful discussion on this point.


12I have translated the entire phrase “for the whole period of my youth in Nysa.” The translation “when I was very young” (Hamilton and Falconer 1903–1906: 3.26; Radt 2002—: 4.51) is also possible but ignores the force of διηκοσμημένος.

13There are frequent references in classical literature to an “Aristodemus”; likewise, “Aristodemus” is cited in manuscript margins as an authority in matters of literary criticism. The cited works
at the time he wrote these words, his youth at the time of his education by Aristodemus, combined with Aristodemus' advanced age when he was teaching Strabo—all these will have conspired to make Strabo one of the few individuals still living who could claim to have had personal contact with the great man. Strabo’s description of Aristodemus as ἐσχατόγηγος (“extremely old”)

14 suggests that Aristodemus had been at least in his eighth decade of life, and perhaps even in his ninth, at the time he was teaching Strabo. In using the word ἐσχατόγηγος, Strabo is perhaps tipping a wink

15 at his own attainment of a similarly advanced age at the time of writing.

The combined life spans of Aristodemus and Strabo yield a period of intellectual continuity lasting over a hundred years, from Aristodemus’ early adulthood to Strabo’s old age. The intellectual tradition of which Strabo is so proud extends even further back. In mentioning Aristodemus’ father (Menecrates) and Menecrates’ teacher (Aristarchus), Strabo traces the tradition back to that renowned Greek intellectual and one-time librarian at Alexandria, 16 who had embarked on his scholarly career in the 180s or 170s. 17 A two-hundred-year-old tradition of scholarship is no mean achievement. Strabo is justly proud of its length as well as of his own contribution to its continuity.

A second instance of overlap sees Strabo inserting himself into a very different tradition. In describing Crete, Strabo has occasion to mention that the city of Cnossus was the home of his great-grandfather (Lagetas) and great-great-uncle (Stratarchas), adding τόν Στρατάρχαν ἐσχατόγηγον καὶ ἡμεῖς ἡδη

18 εἴδομεν (“even I saw Stratarchas, when he was extremely old,” Str. 477 C,

do not survive: in their absence, it is difficult to ascertain whether they were produced by Strabo’s teacher or by other attested scholars of the same name. Schwartz (1895: 926) sees Strabo’s teacher as the author of works on grammar, Homer and history. Knaack (1903: 133) suggests that the same Aristodemus produced a work on myths. Jacoby (1957a: 186; cf. 1957b: 498, 563) catalogues the Aristodemus responsible for compiling myths, omitting Strabo’s testimony in 1957a but noting in 1957b the possibility of identification with Strabo’s teacher.

14 Although age terms were obviously not used formulaically, general usage in antiquity suggests that men in their sixties were considered merely “old.” “Extremely old” suggests an age of seventy years or more. Cassius Dio describes Isauricus (who reached at least his ninth decade and possibly even entered his tenth) as “hypergeriatricus” (ὑπεργεριτρικός): see below, 44, nn. 28 and 29. For sixty marking the threshold of old age, see Harlow and Laurence 2002: 118; Thane 2005: 17; Parkin 2005: 41; Cokayne 2007: 210, n. 6.

15 Cf. Strabo’s possible playful allusion elsewhere to his own name, discussed at Poetaecy 1999: 695.

16 P. Oxy. 1241, lines 11–13.

17 Rostagni (1956: 211) puts Aristarchus’ death in, or after, 131, undermining arguments that Aristarchus had died earlier, ca 146. Aristarchus probably reached at least seventy years of age, even if we do not necessarily accept the precise figure of “seventy two” years attributed to him by the Suda (s.v. Ἀρίσταρχος, A 3892, ed. Adler). No manuscripts survive of Aristarchus’ works, the nature of which has to be deduced from literary references and comments in manuscript margins, with allowance being made for the existence of works by other attested scholars of the same name. For an overall assessment, see Cohn 1896 and 1903.

18 ἡδη strictly means “already” or “yet” but, in Strabo’s usage, often translates better as “even.” See Poetaecy 1997: 243, n. 39.
line 30). Strabo’s description of Stratachas as, like Aristodemus, “extremely old” (ἐσχατόγηρος) suggests that Stratachas had been in his eighth or ninth decade of life at the time of their overlap. Strabo does not specify his own youth in relation to Stratachas, but the interposition of three generations between Strabo and his great-great-uncle make it self-evident.

The combined life spans of Strabo and Stratachas take us back over a hundred years, into the historical heart of the once-great kingdom of Pontus. Lage- tas and Stratachas were brothers from a family closely connected to Pontic royalty. Their father, Dorylaus, had served as a military recruiter to the Pontic king; indeed, it was Dorylaus’ responsibilities in this field that had taken him to Crete. On the assassination of king Mithridates v Euergetes, Dorylaus had decided to stay put until the uncertainties of the succession were worked out. This decision explains why Dorylaus’ sons, Lagetas and Stratachas, were born in Crete rather than in Pontus.

The new king of Pontus, Mithridates vi Eupator, still young at the time of the succession, grew to manhood in the company of a cousin of Lagetas and Stratachas. Once Mithridates vi was firmly established on the Pontic throne, the cousin facilitated the return of his extended family back to Pontus. Strabo tells us that the repatriated were οἱ περὶ Λαγήτας (“those around Lagetas,” 478 C, lines 4–5), a curious idiom which somewhat counter-intuitively is either limited to,19 or at least includes,20 Lagetas himself. The former would entail that Stratachas stayed in Crete after his brother’s departure to Pontus,21 making it possible that Strabo saw Stratachas in Crete, which is in turn consistent with indications in his geographical narrative that Strabo had visited the island.22 Alternatively, the idiom may be taken to mean “Lagetas and his family,”23 in which case Stratachas may be included (although even then, not necessarily24), opening up the possibility that Strabo saw his great-great-uncle in Pontus25 rather than Crete.

19 In this “limited” sense, the idiom effectively pluralises its subject in the same way that Strabo sometimes pluralises himself (see above, 40, n. 5). The plural participle (ἡγορομένοι) which accompanies the phrase is grammatically required and need not imply that there were also others with Lagetas.

20 Both senses of the idiom are analysed by Radt (1980, looking at various authors, including Strabo, and 1988, focusing on Strabo).


23 Lasserre (1971: 91) translates “les enfants de Lagétas,” which is clearly unacceptable in the light of Radt’s more recent analysis. Hamilton and Falconer (1903–1906: 2.198) translate “Lagetas and his brother”; Jones (1917–32: 5.135), “the household of Lagetas and his brother”; Radt (2002: 3.253, with commentary ad loc. 7.211), “Lagetas und sein Bruder.” Translating the phrase specifically to include Stratachas may be misleading (see below, n. 24). Radt’s earlier uncertainty (1980: 50, 54, and n. 7) is justified.

24 The grammatically-required participle ἡγορομένοι (“having grown to manhood”) neither necessitates Stratachas’ inclusion on the grounds of its plurality (see above, n. 19) nor excludes other family members on the grounds of its masculine gender.

25 For possible indications of Strabo’s presence in Pontus as an adult, see Dueck 2000: 18.
As a result of the ambiguities inherent in the expression οἱ πΕρὶ Λαγέταν, the geographical location of Strabo’s overlap with his great-great-uncle is not known: Crete, Pontus, or even Nysa (if it was Stratarchas who did the visiting rather than the other way around). Wherever the overlap occurred, its effect is to link Strabo to a time before Mithridates vi Eupator had even reached the age of majority, yet alone gone on to secure the Pontic throne, take his kingdom to new heights of glory and power and then preside over its descent into humiliation and defeat at the hands of the Romans. By the time that Strabo is writing out the manuscript of the Geography, the kingdom of Pontus is long gone, its territories variously dispersed but mostly now under Roman control in one form or another. Stratarchas’ long life—wherever it was lived—had spanned both the apogee of the independent kingdom of Pontus and its nadir, while Strabo in his long life had witnessed its Roman transformation.

A third instance of overlap sees Strabo linking himself to the Roman world of the late republic, to a time when individual Roman aristocrats had been able to win fame and glory through their military exploits. One such aristocrat was Publius Servilius Isauricus, who had earned his cognomen by conquering Isaurica and incorporating it into the Roman province of Cilicia. Indeed, it is in describing this area that Strabo has occasion to mention this renowned individual, naming him by all three of his tria nomina and appending to the name the relative clause “whom I saw” (δὲ ἡμεῖς εἴδομεν, 568 C, line 34).26

Isauricus was famous in the Rome of his day for his longevity. He lived at least into his ninth decade, and possibly entered his tenth.27 The year of his death was 44.28 Given this date, it is clear that Strabo was young when he saw Isauricus. The discrepancy in ages between the young Strabo and the elderly Isauricus must have been huge, some seven decades or more. The combination of their life spans takes us back some hundred and fifty years to the birth of Isauricus in the 130s.29 Over the intervening period, much had changed. Isauricus witnessed, and contributed to, the military glory of the Roman republic but also lived to see its descent into civil war (he died in the year that Caesar was assassinated), while Strabo had seen the ascent of Augustus and, with the succession of Tiberius, the establishment of an imperial dynasty.

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26 Radt (2002 – 3.497) translates “den wir gesehen haben,” which is far more likely than the translation (“with whom I was acquainted”) sometimes found in the secondary literature (see below, 49, n. 51).
27 The Suda (s.v. Ἀπίκιος Μαρκός, A 3213, ed. Adler) attributes to Isauricus a lifespan of ὁμοῦ (i.e., “about,” or “in round numbers”) ninety years. In this case, the Suda is consistent with other evidence (see below, n. 28).
29 Isauricus held the post of praetor, either in 90 (Münzer 1923: 1812) or a few years earlier (DKP s.v. “Servilius 35”), implying a birth year in, or before, 130.
A letter written by Cicero in 50 sheds further light on the possible nature of the overlap between Strabo and Isauricus. The letter is addressed to P. Silius, governor of the Roman province of Bithynia and Pontus. In it, Cicero asks the governor to be especially attentive to the needs of some “Nysaeans,” i.e., inhabitants of the city of Nysa. Some ten years before Cicero’s letter was written, in the wake of the Roman defeat of king Mithridates VI Eupator, large parts of the ex-kingdom of Pontus had been amalgamated with the province of Bithynia. The individuals for whom Cicero petitions help are perhaps erstwhile inhabitants of the kingdom, with land or business interests in what had now become the Roman province of Bithynia and Pontus, who had relocated to Nysa in Roman Asia—hence “Nysaeans.” This is precisely the move that Strabo’s own family had made. A suggested emendation of the letter’s addressee, changing him from governor of Bithynia and Pontus to governor of Asia, is unnecessary.

In his letter, Cicero pleads the case of a particular individual named “Servilius Strabo.” It has been suggested that this man was the father, or other relative, of our geographer. Whether or not that is the case, this man’s possession of the nomen “Servilius” raises the possibility that he, or his family, had acquired Roman citizenship though connections with the Servilii, the family of which Isauricus was the patriarch. If so, the date of Cicero’s letter is significant. It entails that any connections between Servilius Strabo and the Servilii were established by 50; and may have been the product of a visit by the family patriarch himself to Asia in the years before his son held the governorship of Asia (46–44).

Might Strabo have seen Isauricus in Asia rather than in Rome? There is some evidence, hitherto not accorded sufficient prominence, that Isauricus was a familiar figure in Roman Asia. He was honoured with a statue in the marketplace of the city of Magnesia. The plaque which accompanied the statue survives, commemorating Isauricus both on his own account and on account of his son’s benefactions towards the Artemis temple in the city of Magnesia and towards the city itself. Strabo mentions this temple in the course of his description of Asia, specifically noting the craftsmanship of its sacred enclosure as

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31For the provincial reorganisation, see Mitchell 2002: 48–50 and further literature cited at his n. 99.
33For a survey of the scholarship on Servilius Strabo, see Cassia 2000: 220–224 and Bowersock 2000: 18–19.
34Strabo is virtually silent about his father. For the one apparent reference to him, see the ms readings given in the critical apparatus by Radt (2002: 3.468) relating to 557 C, line 29. The ms readings make no grammatical sense and should perhaps be understood as a reference to the grandfather of Strabo’s mother (Pothecary 1999: 700–701, n. 46).
35For the date of the governorship, see DNP “Servilius I.24.” Father and son bore the same tria nominia, “P. Servilius Isauricus.”
36Kern 1900: 118, no. 142.
superior to that of the Artemis temple in Ephesus (647 C, lines 25–30), which he had personally seen (640 C, line 21–641 C, line 23). It is quite likely, given the tone of Strabo’s description of Magnesia in general, as well as his comparison of the two temples,\(^7\) that Strabo had also personally seen the Artemis temple at Magnesia. Magnesia is a possible locale for Strabo’s overlap with Isauricus.

The activities of Isauricus which prompted his commemoration in Magnesia may well pre-date his son’s governorship. On the one hand, Isauricus is unlikely to have been in Asia as late as the period 46–44.\(^8\) On the other hand, Isauricus was still politically active into the 50s,\(^9\) so that a visit to Asia in that decade is feasible, and could have been witnessed by the young Strabo. It is true that Isauricus was advanced in years in the 50s, but it is recorded that he was in amazingly good form for his age.\(^10\) We should rid ourselves of the notion that physically fit men in their late seventies or early eighties were incapable of travel, even under the conditions of the time. Romans admired old men who remained active for as long as possible in the public arena—Isauricus is by no means the only example.\(^41\)

The fourth and final instance of Strabonian overlap investigated in this paper is not with a person at all, but with a painting:

τόν δὲ Διόνυσον ἀνοικέμενον ἐν τῷ Δημητρείῳ τῷ ἐν Ἐρώμη κάλλιστον ἐργον ἡσώμεν (ἐμφανίζετο δὲ τοῦ νεῶ, συνηφανίζθη καὶ ἡ γραφὴ νεώστη)

I saw the “Dionysus”—a most beautiful work—laid up as an offering in the Ceres temple in Rome. The temple having burnt down, the painting also recently disappeared along with it. \(^{\text{Str. 381 C, lines 14–16}}\)

Strabo tells us that the picture had been painted by Aristides, an artist active in the fourth century B.C.E., which means that the “Dionysus” was already some three hundred years old when Strabo saw it. Strabo is looking back from his old age to an event of his youth, because he tells us that he saw the picture in the Ceres temple before it burnt down in a fire, and the fire is known to have occurred in 31. The reference to the painting’s fate is ambiguous. In using the word συνηφανίζθη, Strabo might mean that the picture was destroyed in the same conflagration as the temple. Alternatively, Strabo might mean, more

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\(^7\) Dueck (2000) includes Ephesus among the sites that Strabo had definitely visited (19); Magnesia among the sites that Strabo is extremely likely to have visited (24).

\(^8\) Cicero (Fam. 211, ed. Shackleton Bailey) writes from Rome in late 46 to the younger P. Servilius Isauricus in Asia and promises to look after the latter’s father, perhaps an indication that the elder Isauricus was finally succumbing to the exigencies of old age. Isauricus died in the first half of 44, and a state funeral was held for him (see above, 44, n. 28).

\(^9\) Münzer 1923: 1816.

\(^10\) Suda s.v. Ἀρκτικός Ἡρακλῆς, A 3213, ed. Adler.

\(^41\) For other examples, see Cokayne 2007: 212–218, esp. 216 (“old men who continued to be of service to the State would avoid contempt and be less likely to experience feelings of disengagement and isolation”); 218 (“old age was not an excuse for idleness; rest and recreation by themselves were considered demeaning and self-indulgent—old men had to be seen to be active”).
literally, that the picture had simply disappeared. The qualification of the event as “recent” (νεωστή) is interesting in view of the fact that the Ceres temple had been restored and reopened in 17 C.E. Perhaps Strabo had been expecting to view the unharmed picture afresh in the restored temple, and had been disappointed not to find it there. The “Dionysus” by Aristides is far older than any of the mortal men with whom Strabo overlaps. Although Strabo regrets its loss, he continues to appreciate its worth, as apparent from his parenthetical description of it as “a most beautiful work.” In a sense, Strabo’s continued experience of the work prolongs the painting’s life beyond its regrettable disappearance. At the same time, the picture had played a prominent role in history, for it had been used by Roman soldiers at the sack of Corinth as a chequers board. Strabo’s viewing of the picture thus ties Strabo to an event symbolising the end of the independence of mainland Greece. Furthermore, the sacrilege which the picture suffered had been witnessed by none other than Polybius, a Greek intellectual much admired by Strabo and, indeed, cited by him for the story of the picture’s chequered past (pun intended). The fact that the “Dionysus” had been gazed upon by both Polybius and Strabo is a physical manifestation of the intellectual bond between them.

Strabo’s recording of his overlap with the “Dionysus” exemplifies an attitude which underlies the other overlaps he records. The world changes, but overlapping human lives provide continuity across the years, connecting past and present even in the face of rapid change. Circumstance has brought it about that Strabo’s own life illustrates the continuity of the Greek intellectual tradition (through his overlap with Aristodemus and, via the “Dionysus,” even with Polybius). Strabo’s life has also had its points of contact with individuals (Stratarchas and Isauricus) who survived through, and came to symbolise, the transformation of the political world.

II. DATING THE OVERLAPS

The attempt to extract biographical information from Strabo’s overlaps might seem, at first glance, a futile effort to mine veins that have been already been exhausted. Two factors make it worthwhile. First, some relevant events, in particular the death of Aristarchus and the birth of Sextus Pompey, have recently been re-dated. Secondly, an integrated treatment of Strabo’s youthful overlaps helps us build up a tentative but cohesive picture of Strabo’s early years.

42 Strabo’s usage of νεωστή has loomed large in discussions on the date of the composition of the Geography. For a detached assessment, see Clarke 1997: 102. Strictly, Strabo applies νεωστή not to the burning of the temple but to the fate of the painting. There is perhaps some wordplay between νεωστή and νεωστή.
43 For detailed discussion of this passage, see Pothecary 2005: 13–15, 17, 24, n. 68.
We start again with Aristodemus. Strabo’s remark that Aristodemus had earlier taught the sons of Pompey provides an overlooked clue as to the timing of Aristodemus’ move from Rome back to the province of Asia. Pompey’s younger son, Sextus, was born in the period 68–66.\textsuperscript{44} Sextus’ grammatical education will have lasted until he was about fifteen or sixteen years of age, extending therefore at least into the late 50s.\textsuperscript{45} The next step of Sextus’ education was probably derailed by his father’s political misfortunes, ending in Pompey’s departure from Rome with his followers early in 49 and the dispatching of Sextus, with his step-mother, to the Greek island of Lesbos.\textsuperscript{46}

As a member of Pompey’s entourage, Aristodemus is likely to have left Rome at around this time. It is true that we do not know exactly when Sextus finished his education, nor whether Aristodemus left Rome immediately thereafter. However, Strabo’s overlap with Aristodemus was a long one, and the bulk (if not all) of it is most plausibly put in the 40s.\textsuperscript{47} Such an overlap is consistent with death overtaking Aristodemus at the end of the decade, ca 40; consistent, too, with Aristodemus’ father (Menecrates)\textsuperscript{48} being a disciple of Aristarchus.\textsuperscript{49} These combined considerations suggest a birth year for Aristodemus in the 120s, which would mean that he was in his eighth decade at the time of his overlap with Strabo and had probably entered his ninth decade before his death. Such a life course would certainly warrant Strabo’s description of him as ἐκχορτόγνηρος at the time of their overlap.

Strabo’s brief overlap with Isauricus probably occurred at some point in the 50s, prior to Strabo’s education under Aristodemus or during its very early stages. The view that Strabo was an adult at the time of his overlap with Isauricus deserves to be challenged.\textsuperscript{50} Strabo’s assumed adulthood at the time of the overlap is largely the result of supposing its geographical location to have been Rome. While it is true that Strabo would have reached adulthood before heading off to Rome, the point is irrelevant if he was still in Asia when he saw Isauricus. The assumption of Strabo’s adulthood is also partly the result of

\textsuperscript{44}Miltner 1952: 2214; \textit{contra} Hadas 1930: 5–9.
\textsuperscript{45}Bonner (1977: 27) dates Aristodemus’ tutelage of both Pompey’s sons ca 65. On Miltner’s dating (see above, n. 44), Aristodemus’ tutelage of Sextus should be put a decade later.
\textsuperscript{46}Hadas 1930: 24–35.
\textsuperscript{47}As by Schwartz (1895: 926), who puts the overlap “between 50 and 40 b.c.e.” Gercke (1907: 119–120) puts it between 60 and 55/45, but assumes a birth year for Sextus of 75. The re-dating of Sextus’ birth year to 68–66 (see above, n. 44) is widely accepted: for example, \textit{DKP} s.v. “Pompeius 3”; \textit{OCD}³.
\textsuperscript{48}Aristodemus’ father was perhaps an older relative of the Nysaean “Menecrates” who had a son with Posidonius’ daughter (Suda s.v. ‘Ἰάσσον, I 52, ed. Adler). The shared name does not provide sufficient grounds to identify the two men.
\textsuperscript{49}For the dating of Aristarchus’ death to 131 or later, see above, 42, n. 17.
\textsuperscript{50}This view has been used to support a birth year for Strabo ca 64. See Bowersock 2000: 18; Dueck 2000: 85. Clarke (1997: 101) and Engels (1999: 26) inject a welcome note of caution.
translating εἰδομεν (568 C, line 34) as "I was acquainted with," which is then taken to indicate social intimacy between two grown men. It is quite possible, on the basis of the (more correct, in my view) translation "I saw," that Strabo was a child or adolescent at the time of his overlap with Isauricus, perhaps taken by his family to see the visiting statesman.

The very late 40s, or the 30s, are the likely time for Strabo's advanced studies to have taken place in Rome under Tyrannio, dates that are consistent with Strabo arriving in Rome and seeing the "Dionysus" before the conflagration that destroyed the temple in which it was housed. Greater precision is impossible given that we do not know whether Strabo went straight to Rome from Nysa, nor whether he began his studies under Tyrannio immediately upon arrival. Tyrannio died soon after 30. According to the Suda, he was γεραιός at the time of his death, i.e., "old" but not "extremely old" (as in Strabo's descriptions of Aristodemus and Stratarchas) nor "hypergeriatric" (as in Dio's description of Isauricus). Tyrannio is best seen as a slightly younger contemporary of Aristodemus, with the age difference between Strabo and Tyrannio being sizeable but not as dramatic as that between Strabo and Aristodemus.

As for Stratarchas, we know from Strabo that he was born a few years, perhaps two or three, after the death of Mithridates v Euergetes in 121/120. Stratarchas is unlikely to have warranted the description "extremely old" (δισχαρτόγηρος) much before the end of the 40s or the beginning of the 30s. Stratarchas' extreme old age thus coincides with the period within which Strabo left Nysa to pursue further studies abroad. Strabo could have stopped off in Crete or Pontus to see members of his extended family, with Stratarchas being the oldest surviving family member and thus the one providing the most significant link with the past.

Of the aged individuals with whom Strabo overlapped, Isauricus wins the prize for the earliest birth year (in the 130s), with Aristodemus (in the 120s)

52 Strabo's studies under Tyrannio probably constitute the testimonium of latest date for Tyrannio, being later (on the arguments advanced in this article) than Cicero's letter of 46, for which see Haas 1977: T 15–16, and p. 94–95.
53 Neither the fact that Strabo calls Tyrannio ἀ γραμματικός (548 C, line 14; 609 C, line 18), nor the fact that Tyrannio was employed in Cicero's household to teach at the secondary level (Cic. QFr. 8.2), is incompatible with Tyrannio teaching Strabo at an advanced level.
54 For the evidence for Strabo's presence in Rome, see Dueck 2000: 85–86.
55 Haas (1977: 95) puts Tyrannio's death between 30 and 20. A date in the earlier part of that time window seems preferable (see below, n. 57).
56 Suda s.v. Τυραννιος, T 1184, ed. Adler.
57 Tyrannio was probably born in the 110s. As a young man, he studied under Dionysius Thrax, who, like Aristodemus' father, had been a pupil of Aristarchus. Haas (1977: T 1, 3, and pp. 95–96) dates Tyrannio's overlap with Dionysius Thrax to the 80s.
and Stratarchas (in the 110s) coming in second and third place. Tyrannio (in the 100s) deserves an honourable mention. This may also be the order they entered Strabo’s life. Between them, they illustrate the fact that a full lifespan in antiquity was only slightly less than in the modern era. Strabo’s long life, and the long lives of the individuals with whom he overlapped, combine to yield chronological spans of well over a hundred years, sometimes as much as one hundred and fifty years. It is this totality of time that has meaning and significance for Strabo, rather than simply his own part in it.

III. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Strabo’s specification that he saw the painting of Dionysus in the temple of Ceres is less an autobiographical insert than an indication of historical continuity expressed through his own activity. We certainly cannot assume that Strabo had not seen other works of art that he mentions in the course of his narrative, just because he does not say so. The same is true for the myriad individuals that crop up in the pages of the Geography. Strabo could have interacted with any number of those that were contemporary with him. His silence over such interactions cannot be taken as evidence of lack of such contact.

It is possible that Strabo had contact with members of the Servilii other than Isauricus pater, especially if this is the family to whom Strabo’s own family owed their patronage. Strabo’s overlap with the old man, however, adds a chronological spice unmatched by contact with other Servilii (or, indeed, with any other individual mentioned by Strabo anywhere in his narrative). Within his own family, Strabo presumably overlapped with others apart from Stratarchas, such as his mother (unless we are to assume that she died in childbirth) and grandmother (478 C, line 6). Again, such overlaps lack the chronological drama provided by Stratarchas’ extreme old age, and this surely explains why Strabo, although he mentions these other family members, does not specify contact.

Many of the individuals mentioned by Strabo in the course of his narrative are Greek intellectuals with whom he may have overlapped in some capacity or other. The few cases where such overlap is specified should not be taken as an exhaustive list of Strabo’s intellectual influences. Strabo’s record of his relationship with Aristodemus provides a chronological framework rather than, or at least in addition to, boosting Strabo’s educational credentials. Instances

58 Parkin (2005: 40) notes that the main difference nowadays is the greater number of people who attain their full span.
60 Engels (2005: 129) counts over two hundred eminent Greeks mentioned by Strabo (some of them predating Strabo); Dueck (2000: 87–88) gives over forty Roman contemporaries mentioned by him.
61 The daughter of Lagetas was Strabo’s grandmother, and her daughter was Strabo’s mother.
62 Dueck 2000: 8–11.
in which Strabo mentions overlaps with other intellectuals should be viewed with an eye to the extra dimension that the overlaps add to Strabo’s narrative. In some instances, that dimension may be geographical. When, for example, Strabo mentions his overlap with Tyrannio (“under whom I studied,” 548 C, line 14) in the context of Tyrannio’s origins in the city of Amisus, the overlap may be intended as an allusion to Tyrannio’s removal to Rome.

The overlaps investigated in this paper have been called “explicit self-references.” While they may be autobiographical, they only incidentally provide clues to Strabo’s early years. Their major contribution is to help us understand Strabo’s vantage point from old age, his interest in the past, his attitude towards the vast historical changes that have taken place during his lifetime and the continuity through it all of the Greek intellectual tradition of which Strabo is a proud standard bearer.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY


63 Clarke 1997: 99-102. Strabo’s overlaps in some way have more in common with what Clarke terms “oblique self-references,” situating Strabo in his social and intellectual milieu (102–108).