

1 **The Lyceum in Twilight: Athens' "Second School" and its**
 2 **Struggle to Re-Invent Itself and Survive in the Last Years of**
 3 **the Roman Republic**
 4

5 Though this study is set in the last century of the Roman Republic, the story
 6 of the twilight struggle of Aristotle's school at Athens in the early Roman years is
 7 in many ways a very contemporary thing: an exploration of "small college"
 8 survival – the survival of Athens' "second school" after the most damaging crisis
 9 in the city's academic history.

10 I have explored the story of the crisis that triggered this in detail on previous
 11 occasions¹, but the essentials are these. An Anatolian agent had in 88-87
 12 attempted an anti-Roman coup in Athens, using credentials – true or false – as a
 13 student at the Lyceum and as a graduate of the Akademe, making out of them
 14 locally important intellectual capital. His name was Athenion. While paramilitary
 15 forces prepared for him in Pontus tried to engineer his takeover bid in the city, his
 16 rhetoric pushed buttons about the decline of the Athens from its classic years, the
 17 shrinking of its public life, the waning of the school he had attended.

18
 19 "Let us not stand by inactive while the temples are shut, the gymnasia foul through
 20 disuse, the theater without the ecclesia, the jury-courts silent, and the Pnyx taken
 21 away from the people ... Let us not stand by inactive, men of Athens, whilst the
 22 sacred cry Iacchos is silenced, and the hallowed sanctuary of Castor and Pollux is
 23 closed, and the conference halls of the philosophers are voiceless."²
 24

25 When his coup failed, his hired muscle took hostages from leading city
 26 families to keep the families themselves trapped within the walls. They dug in on
 27 the Acropolis. A Roman force removed them, but it was not made up of those
 28 Romans enchanted by the city's culture and schools that were becoming the city's
 29 lifeline. Instead, captive Athens fell to the eccentric, Epicurean-educated outlaw
 30 Sulla. Sulla succeeded at smashing the hostage takers, but in doing damaged the
 31 city callously, even rooted the trees out of the ancient groves of learning –
 32 perhaps of what was left of the Lyceum, and certainly out of the Academe – and
 33 used them to build siege engines, in part just to show he was not mesmerized by
 34 the ancient cultural heritage around him, even if other Romans were. The
 35 "silence" in the schools was (for the Lyceum as we shall see) a little true, but the
 36 aftermath Athenion and Sulla left was in subtle ways far worse for smaller
 37 schools like Aristotles'. It set in motion an ancient first-century version of what we

¹Ref., e.g., Students in the (Ancient) Streets, or Agent(s) Provocateur? The Liberal Arts Schools of Athens and the Hostage Crisis of 88. *Athens Journal of History* Vol. 6, Issue 4 (Oct 2020).

²Athenaeus v, 212b. The translation is from Ferguson, W.S. *Hellenistic Athens: an Historical Essay*. (London, 1911), p. 443.

1 have, since the mid-20th Century, often called a “brain drain.”

2 But damage to the Lyceum had begun earlier. Athens had survived the
3 original war that brought the Romans to Greece – the war against Philip V of
4 Macedon in the early 100’s – as ‘walking wounded,’ but walking with a hopeful
5 stride. Among the serious wounds it tried to ignore, though, were those to
6 Aristotle’s old school in the Lyceum grove. Roman defense against Philip’s
7 money-raising raids on an exhausted Greece arrived as asked, but what came to
8 Athens was primarily naval and concentrated upon the excellent facilities in the
9 Piraeus.³ Philip, after his war chieftain Nicanor had been bluffed back by the
10 ships,⁴ was forced to lead a spoiling raid through the Attic farm country himself.
11 Though he was able to beat the Athenian hoplite force handily enough, he found
12 the newly reinforced city impregnable. Frustrated, he moved round to its quiet
13 southeastern outskirts and sacked its *gymnasium* (hitherto largely untouched by
14 warfare), damaging the Cynics garden of Cynosarges and the Lyceum in the
15 process.⁵ As he retreated, he attacked and mutilated statues and shrines in the
16 Athenian suburbs and the country villages of Attica – if Athens wanted to play
17 for Roman help using its spiritual *auctoritas* its symbolic heritage as trump cards,
18 it could pay by seeing the symbols destroyed.

19 And so, the school limped through the new era down to the arrival of Sulla
20 in the 80’s, who was a Roman outlaw facing a return to Rome and an attempted
21 coup of his own. He needed both intellectual capital and perhaps some strategic
22 help. His victory against Aristion and Archelaus (Athenion’s replacements) at
23 Athens he hoped would read as a victory over Mithridates and his Anatolian
24 provocateur insurgents, defense of an innocent city. He needed to acquire some
25 captive expertise and the fashionable *cachet*, just as the victories of Aemilius
26 Paullus had allowed him to confiscate his own following of Greek intellectuals
27 almost a century earlier. There was no Polybius to bring to Rome this time, but
28 Sulla’s officer Ateius, according to Plutarch the first over the wall in the taking of
29 Athens, caught himself the grammarian Philologus and carried him, as Sulla’s
30 army orchestrated chaos after the Battle of the Colline Gate and managed his
31 coup, back to a distinguished career at Rome.⁶

32 Such “exports” as that did Athens as a city no good at all, of course. Political
33 refugees from the post-Sullan war torn Greece filled the small and shifting market
34 for elite teachers in Italy rather than advertising the home campus of Aristotle. In
35 a previous study presented here, I noted how Philo of Larissa fled his post as
36 head of the Academy when the onslaught of Mithridatic propaganda (and
37 perhaps the early machinations of the Peripatetic political adventurer Athenion)

³Livy XXXI, xiv, 3; and XXXI, xxii, 4 ff.

⁴Polybius xvi, 27. Livy XXXI, xvi, 2 (where the general is called Philocles).

⁵Diodorus xxviii, 7.

⁶Suetonius, *De Grammaticis* 10. Varro, *De Lingua Latinae* vii, 10. J.P.V.D. Balsdon, *Romans and Aliens* (Chapel Hill, 1979), p. 57. Rawson, . *Intellectual Life in the Late Republic*. (London, 1985,2002), p. 124.

1 began to seem menacing. In Rome, Philo attracted both followers and
 2 controversy (see below). Both are likely as not to have attracted a few more
 3 students to the Athenian schools, but neither Philo nor his antagonist Antiochus
 4 of Ascalon returned to teach in Athens during the next years. Philo was soon
 5 dead, and Antiochus found it convenient to disappear into the newly-Roman East
 6 as advisor to Lucullus. Aristotelians like Philologus stayed in Italy for the same
 7 reasons.

8 And yet, all the trouble could have helped a 'second school' like the Lyceum.
 9 After all, it was "collateral damage" caused by the cloud of suspicion and
 10 notoriety hanging over the *Akademe* after the duel between Mithridates and Sulla.
 11 It was heightened by the behavior of Sulla himself in Italy over the next few years
 12 -- Sulla advertised his roots in the Epicurean school. Athenion, the Mithridatic
 13 agent who had begun this "hostage crisis" that Athens barely survived at the
 14 beginning of the 80's, had used some form of credential from study at the
 15 Aristotelian and Platonic schools as political ammunition, but he had *left studies at*
 16 *the Lyceum* to finish at the *Academe*. He had, into the bargain, tried to paint a
 17 picture of a damaged or dying academic world, as he also tried to depict a
 18 political Athens strangled by pro-Roman business interests.

19 So, could the Mithridatic crisis in the Athens of the 80's help the Lyceum? If
 20 the heaviest damage was to the reputation of the Platonic *academe*, that school was
 21 still so embedded in the Mediterranean intellectual landscape that it was very
 22 resilient⁷ (see the study of the *Academe* presented here last year). It remained not
 23 only economically viable, but by far the most famous and attractive of Athenian
 24 schools. The Lyceum could not prevent it from continuing to skim the cream of a
 25 momentarily shocked and suspicious clientele – especially in the Mediterranean
 26 to the west of Greece. How was the 'second school' of Athens during this era to
 27 survive, to create an intellectual persona that could attract its fair share of critical
 28 new (western) students? Where were its wealthy or powerful alumni to come
 29 from in the new era?

30 For an intellectual mascot, the *Akademe* had Plato (however far it now
 31 strayed from his teachings). The Aristotelian approach to human culture and the
 32 universe was still worth something, though. The Lyceum aimed, in the popular
 33 perception at least, at collecting and understanding real-world data about life; a
 34 rival for those Epicureans bent on 'engineering' data toward concrete goals; a
 35 rival for those Stoics who claimed to achieve an inner balance and spiritual
 36 perspective on life. It was not quite as famous, or as fashionable, but the age
 37 between Sulla and Caesar gave it a moment to shine.

38

⁷See D.P. Wick *Stoics and Epicureans for the 'Modern Market': How Athenian Educators Re-Tooled the Old City's 'Modernist Schools' for Republican Rome*, *The Athens Journal of History*, (Vol 4, issue 4 October 2017), and a coming study of the surviving *Akademe* in this same vein.

The Lyceum, Not Quite Silent

1
2
3 The most significant place to start, then, would be (for the student culture of
4 Athens) with the fact that Athenian ephebic inscriptions of the period after Sulla's
5 siege no longer mention any lectures continuing at either the Academy or the
6 Lyceum.⁸ Of the schools Athens supported, the Lyceum had radical challenges to
7 face.

8 Part of its particular trouble lay rooted in a weakness (intended as a strength)
9 as old as Aristotle himself – the practice of encouraging traveling research, the
10 “overseas semester” that produced so much of what filled the Aristotelian essays
11 as scholar after scholar returned to the school and enriched it with what they had
12 studied first-hand in foreign places. As often as not they stayed where they
13 studied, and this era only made that likelier. Aristotle had, after all, not only
14 studied “away” while running the new Lyceum, but had left it for an extended
15 stay with the young Alexander in Macedon. His successor Theophrastus, after
16 considerable success in Athens, had taken a more lucrative offer from Pergamum,
17 and actually absconded with the school’s library on his departure.⁹

18 Scholars suspect that the succession of teachers and administrators may
19 actually have lapsed at Aristotle’s old school after the war with Philip.¹⁰ Aside
20 from the famous Critolaus of the second century B.C., we have names of probable
21 *scholarchs* or lead scholars at the Lyceum who include Diodorus of Tyre (he likely
22 taught the father of the political predator Athenion), an Erymneus (just a name),
23 the rather uncertain Andronicus of Rhodes and Boethius of Sidon, and finally the
24 better-known Cratippus of Pergamum who Cicero speaks of during his later
25 years.¹¹ But Cratippus (a story I followed in my article on the Platonic *Akademe*)
26 was actually a student of the famous, revisionist, platonist Antiochus of Ascalon,

⁸J. Glucker, *Antiochus and the Late Academy*, (Göttingen, 1978), ch. 1; Rawson, op. cit., p. 11.

⁹J.P. Lynch, *Aristotle’s School: a Study of Greek Educational Institution*, (Berkeley, 1972). The library seems to have gone with either Theophrastus or his entourage of students to Pergamum in Asia Minor and thence, via the brokerage of the bookdealer/adventurer/naval brigand Apellicon of Teos, onto the Athenian ‘used’ market, thence into Sulla’s hands, and finally to Italy. See Elizabeth Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Republic* (London, 1985, 2002), pp. 40, and related discussions). A really good library, one suspects, would in any case have been far more critical for the serious continuation of Aristotelian studies than Platonic or Epicurean, ref. points made in this author’s presentation “*Scholar, Smuggler, Mercenary, Thief – A Brief introduction to the Strange History of the Library of Pergamon, and the Stranger Men Who Built and Broke It*” ATINER Conference on the Arts & Humanities, January 2021 (a revision presented at the conference on History, June 21).

¹⁰J.P. Lynch, *Aristotle’s School*, pp. 290-291.

¹¹Ferrary, Jean-Louie, *Philhellénisme et Impérialisme: Aspects Idéologiques de la Conquête Romaine du Monde Hellénistique, de la Seconde Guerre de Macédoine à la Guerre Contre Mithridate* (Rome, 1988), p. 465. Cf. J.P. Lynch, *Aristotle’s School*, esp. pp. 203-205.

1 and then briefly of his duller brother Aristus, and possibly – given his practical
 2 tendencies – even of the skeptical Philo before them. He did not even pretend to
 3 be Aristotelian when he taught at the Lyceum; it simply had a teaching position
 4 open. The Peripatetics of Aristotle’s old school may have espoused him as a sort
 5 of stop-gap. He put students in seats.

6 If Cicero’s Athens really had a Lyceum without Aristotelians, that might in
 7 turn add some color to a list in Clement of Alexandria, which seems to imply that
 8 Diodorus of Tyre was the last Peripatetic scholarch, and that Erymneus was
 9 merely one of his students.¹² The Athenian dialogue in Cicero’s *de Finibus* (set in
 10 79) places M. Pupius Piso in the position of defending the honor of Aristotle and
 11 Theophrastus; there sadly being no defender available from among Athenian
 12 teachers at all, though Antiochus of Ascalon is able to in the piece to appear for
 13 the Academics.¹³ In it Piso also lists a “roll” of Peripatetic leaders, which ends with
 14 Diodorus. Such a gap in its turn casts a light backward onto the “silence” of the
 15 schools about which Athenion complained in 88, since Diodorus is likely to have
 16 been dead by 90 B.C.¹⁴

17 Antiochus of Ascalon, if Glucker was correct, attempted when Diodorus
 18 died, and Philo of Larissa fled looking for consulting fees on the road, to
 19 strengthen his own fledgling school (he called it the “Old Academy”) by claiming
 20 in it to revive in it both the true precepts of the early Academics *and* Peripatetics.
 21 Yes, there were two competing Platonic schools in these years, both rather
 22 practical in career terms, neither very orthodox as Plato would have seen them,
 23 and the newest one claimed it had *replaced* the Lyceum. So, the Cratippus of
 24 Pergamum I mentioned earlier, tried to attract students claiming he was less
 25 “stoic” than then city’s current “star” academic, Aristus; he said nothing about
 26 being Aristotelian, just that he was a more practical option for the career-minded
 27 student than one could get at the Akademe.¹⁵ Professorial talent was so thin on
 28 the ground that one could claim an “old school” credential by representing any
 29 motley “footprint” of ancestral Athenian teachers or traditions one wished.

30 At any rate, Cicero came through in the 70’s and heard no one teaching a
 31 regular course at the Lyceum, though the young Lucius Cicero seems to have
 32 thought that there might be Peripatetic lectures somewhere in town. He was
 33 anxious to hear about the legendary verbal fireworks of Carneades.¹⁶ This
 34 disappointment must have been severe for many young Romans: the Aristotelian
 35 school would have been the one place in Athens where one could hope to get the
 36 real, practical, scientific stuff of civil success and governmental skill. If two
 37 Peripatetic students had been involved in the tragic firestorm of the “88”

¹²Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* I, xiv, 63-64.

¹³Cicero, *De Finibus* v, 13-14.

¹⁴Glucker, *Antiochus*, pp. 15-21. Sedley, D. The End of the Academy, *Phronesis* (1981), pp. 70-71. Ferrary, p. 469.

¹⁵Glucker, *Antiochus*, pp. 119-120. Ferrary, p. 469, n. 115.

¹⁶Cicero, *de Finibus*, v, 6.

1 revolution (as everyone seems at least to have believed),¹⁷ it was only because
 2 Aristotle's school was supposed to teach practicing political theory. However
 3 their parents may have felt, it remains hard to imagine young Romans cut of the
 4 cloth of Catiline or Caelius Rufus being put off by tales about the downfall of
 5 Athenion.

6 By comparison, the Epicurean schools were full of theoretical "logical
 7 positivists" or power strategists (however good the food was), the typical image a
 8 caricature of wise-clever intellectuals who cocked a skeptical eyebrow and
 9 debunked social myths, who would tell you for a fee that a proper understanding
 10 of your component atoms would cure your anxieties. These were what the
 11 English a century ago called "Balliol men;" if young Romans of the late Republic
 12 were going to be taught by *magistri Graeculi* they didn't want clever theorists
 13 about science and harmony with nature and a love for human culture, they
 14 wanted men who knew the inside of 'Whitehall' or 'the Hague' – the way 'insider
 15 meetings' in a government worked, how to manipulate voters during volatile
 16 elections, how to skew public trials or scandals so they spun the right way – all
 17 interests we find very familiar in the 21st century. In modern terms, the 'liberal
 18 arts' and the 'examined life' were *passé*; you wanted your children to learn how to
 19 negotiate the hard way with creditors or investors, or ministers from the EU.

20 But, this didn't *feel* to clients buying schooling at the Lyceum as though it
 21 were a betrayal of an ancient heritage. Aristotle, after all, hadn't talked about
 22 *ataraxia*, the trendy new Greek word for a life free of anxiety, he had talked about
 23 *government*, and now there was no one in his place now doing what he had done.
 24 Cratippus, who seems to have done some "filling in" in the 40's, was ready on the
 25 slightest suggestion of Cicero to pack up and go on an Asian tour with Cicero's
 26 son if there were a little real money forthcoming.¹⁸

27 Thus the "silence in the school" the political predator Athenion rose a cry
 28 about need not have been due to any cessation of public teaching, nor to any
 29 putative Roman intervention in the Attic system of education, nor need we
 30 suppose with Badian that the Peripatetics were somehow "at odds with the
 31 Athenian establishment."¹⁹

32 Athens was after 89/88 simply left with a decaying and second-rate
 33 Aristotelian school, in the wreckage of which we can glimpse only a few
 34 uncertain names and a momentary flash of dangerous political adventure.
 35 Glucker supposes the decline to have arisen when the Asian college at
 36 Pergamum, which had long boasted *itself* as the premier Aristotelian school,
 37 source a better class of Peripatetic scholars, sank under the wave of Roman
 38 exploitation.²⁰

¹⁷Ferrary, pp. 472-473.

¹⁸Cicero, *ad Fam.*, XII, xvi, 2.

¹⁹Badian, "Rome, Athens, and Mithridates," p. 513.

²⁰Glucker, *Antiochus*, pp. 373-379.

1 Aristotelian studies would have their renaissance not in Athens but in Italy.²¹
 2 Andronicus of Rhodes, far from growing into the post of *scholarch* of the Lyceum,
 3 was already or would soon headed for Italy himself, where the Peripatetic library
 4 of Pergamum had also gone. For the rest of his life, he would undertake with
 5 Tyrannio the definitive edition of Aristotle's works.²²

6 To be sure, Aristotle's old school at Athens was not yet quite dead, like the
 7 Academe and the others, it became one of the few easily available weapons
 8 Athens retained for its struggle to find an important place in the Roman world.
 9 Tourism could be turned into an educational draw, and it was. Athenian civic
 10 education (the *ephebeia*) was revamped to regularize the status of foreign students
 11 alongside the native children. The Lyceum was stirred into the mix of city
 12 attractions. Students of the state-run civic school, the *ephebeia* included Romans
 13 now right alongside old-family Athenians. They attended occasional lectures in
 14 the Ptolemaeum by principal teachers of (at least) the Lyceum and Plato's
 15 school.²³ An inscription honors the class of 123/122 for listening to "the lectures of
 16 Zenodotus at the Ptolemaeum and the Lyceum and also all the other
 17 philosophers in the Lyceum and the Academy throughout the year."²⁴ The corps
 18 of *ephebes* were in turn required to donate each year some one hundred volumes
 19 to its library.²⁵ The foreigners among them could now gain for Athenian
 20 citizenship, if they wished it just by finishing a course of study.²⁶ But it was the
 21 Lyceum *name* lending its 'cachet' to an educational business downtown. The old
 22 grove lay in the shadows.

23 The ageing buildings of the classical Athenian democracy looked down from
 24 the heights above the Lyceum grove like the ghosts of a purer era. Whatever
 25 violence or deceit they might have seen in their day, they had seen not just
 26 brilliance, but a brilliance in which competing, contesting and mutating points of
 27 view could be melded into an on-going cultural dialogue.

28 The shade of this across the crowded, intimate landscape of schools and
 29 lecturers, statues and dedications told a story. Perhaps in reaction to what Sulla
 30 had done, the Romans in their better moments would *shade* the city of Athens and

²¹Rawson, *Intellectual Life*, p. 291.

²²Strabo, XIII, C609; XII, C548; XVI C757. Cf. Cicero expecting to find very technical works on Aristotle in the library of *Lucullus*, *Ad Att.* IV, x, 1; *De Finibus* iii, 10; and v, 12.

²³*Inscriptiones Graecae* (vol. I²), 1006.19.

²⁴*Inscriptiones Graecae*, (vol. I²), 1006.19. The 'Ptolemaeum' was the site of the Athenian *ephebeia* or 'civic high school' courses, but the lectures were open to visitors (*especially Mediterranean or especially Roman business families interested in settling in or trading with Athens, whose children could gain Athenian 'double citizenship' if they passed the courses*).

²⁵*Ibid.* Cf. Ferguson, p. 416; Rawson, *Intellectual Life*, p. 12.

²⁶John K. Davies, "Athenian Citizenship: the Descent Group and the Alternatives," in *Classical Journal*, vol. 73 (1975), p. 119. Cf. M.J. Osborne, *Naturalization in Athens*, (Brussels, 1982), 2 vols, p. 205.

1 schools from the crumbling Hellenistic world and their own convulsing Republic.
2 They often returned to Athens, especially to old schools like the Lyceum, when
3 their own power games disintegrated. Whether from nostalgia like Cicero's, or a
4 desire like that of Brutus after Caesar's assassination simply to disappear into a
5 lost, calm world imagined from student days, Roman after Roman came back,
6 and for a time, the aura of the old schools sheltered them.

7 What this could *not* do, of course, was save the schools *as* schools. Those that
8 survived adapted to the new world of power politics and speech media. The
9 broad-minded, tolerant, multi-faceted wisdom – the '*liberal arts perspective*' if you
10 will – that Aristotle had intended would distinguish his school from the
11 Academy, that allowed it more societal innovation than the Stoa, that kept its
12 investigations more integrated with culture and wisdom than the Scientists at the
13 "Garden," was difficult (as it is in our own day) to articulate to a culture of
14 students who hoped to turn tools to their own agendas overnight. Faced with
15 that, the Lyceum seems to have been unable even to hold onto its faculty.
16 Consulting positions, attachments to the players of power were always a danger
17 to a school with the Aristotelian approach. In eras like the late Roman Republic
18 (and in some ways in ours) they formed a weakening solvent that left the school
19 of Aristotle desperately challenged, and produced students who could *compete* in
20 the dangerous player politics of the new world (one so like ours) but very few of
21 whom could step back from it, diagnose, and truly try to cure it.