GLOBAL FAME, LOCAL CLAIM:
THE ATHENIAN ACROPOLIS AS AN
OBJECTIFICATION OF GREEK IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT

The interplay between the global and the local is a vital issue for people around the world, and has accordingly become a subject of interest within the social sciences. The relevant current question is whether globalisation will lead to homogenisation and to the extinction of the local or, on the contrary, to a resurgence of the local. In this context it is interesting to examine the role of a monument which is at the same time coined as ‘national’ and ‘world’ heritage. The Athenian Acropolis, the ‘corner stone of the Classical Greek era’ is often referred to – both within and outside Greece – as a ‘world monument’. At the same time, it is the par excellence national monument of Greece. How can these two (local and global) meanings of the same monument co-exist and how do they interrelate?

To answer this question, this work addresses, among other things, the following issues. Firstly, I analyse the ways in which the idea of Greece is objectified in the material form of a specific archaeological site, namely the Acropolis in Athens. I look at the ways in which the Acropolis becomes the meeting point of classical, contemporary, diasporic, and mainland Hellenisms, thus providing an enduring, unifying, and tangible identity. Secondly, I discuss how – through this material form – Greek identity is contested and negotiated within the global community. The thesis is also concerned with the issue of Greek heritage consumption. I discuss Greek reactions to various cases of global consumption of what is locally perceived as ‘inalienable wealth’. I situate these responses within the framework of the wider ideological relationships between Greece and ‘the West’. I investigate the aesthetics of antiquity, being considered ‘pure’, ‘authentic’, and ‘unique’ in contrast to ‘fake’, massively re-produced, tourist attractions. I study the ways in which the Acropolis is imbued with sacredness. I examine certain aspects of this sacredness including its aesthetics and I investigate ways in which people perceive, use, and reproduce such concepts of sacredness in connection with the Acropolis.
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The pages to follow bear the marks of several people, whose presence has been decisive in the development of the intellectual and emotional quests linked with the creation of this thesis. In hindsight, I do not think that when I joined the department of anthropology at UCL I had realised what a PhD in anthropology really involves.

I remember Dr. Charles Stewart, patiently listening to my impossible questions and striving to understand my confused interpretations of the *Anthropology through the Looking Glass* at the ULU bar in the summer of 1995. His wide range of interests, the flights of his imagination, as well as his warm personality have always been a source of inspiration and encouragement. I will also never forget Prof. Chris Tilley's wry smile at my struggle to define theoretically the topic I was undertaking and at my insistence to make clear-cut distinctions between archaeology and anthropology. I will always be grateful to him for being challenging, for encouraging me to transcend the constraints of disciplinary boundaries, and for making me see the productive aspects of 'being undisciplined'. This charismatic teacher with his deep theoretical grounding has always managed to make even the most elaborate and complicated theories accessible. My deep gratitude is owed to both these teachers for being my supervisors and for opening up intellectual paths since the beginning of my acquaintance with anthropology.

There is, however, an earlier history in me joining the department of anthropology at UCL. I would like to acknowledge the valuable help of Prof. Peter Ucko, Dr. Chris Chippindale, and Dr. Cyprian Broodbank, Dr. Yorgos Angelopoulos and Dr. Yannis Papadakis who discussed with me my ideas and helped me to crystallise my decisions, while I was in search for the place that would accommodate my PhD explorations. Dr. Yannis Hamilakis has also given me help of this kind, and my collaboration with him in two papers gave further inspiration for new ideas presented in this thesis.

No thanks can possibly do justice to the faith my parents have always shown in me and to their unreserved emotional, moral, and intellectual support, along with their 'merciless' criticism. To them I owe much more than the completion of this thesis. By always being there, they make everything feel easier and worthwhile. I am also
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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

For the transliteration I have followed the system suggested by the Journal of Modern Greek Studies, based on sound rather than spelling. Standard anglicisations, however, are retained for well-known names. For ancient names or for words in archaic Greek I have kept a more traditional and non-phonetic system of transliteration. All translations are my own, unless otherwise identified.

As far as transliterations of names are concerned I use the same system apart from cases of Greek authors whose work has been written in, or translated into, English. In that case I adopt the existing transliteration. Finally, any transliterations found in direct quotes have been left in the form in which the author rendered them.

The names of people I talked to have been replaced with fictitious ones in order to maintain their anonymity.

ABBREVIATIONS

ASA: Archaeological Society at Athens
BM: British Museum
CAC: Central Archaeological Committee
GTO: Greek Tourist Organisation
4th GR: 4th class of a government-run school
6th GR: 6th class of a government-run school
6th PR: 6th class of a privately run school
5th GR: 5th class of a government-run school
CK: Calvin Klein
Figure 1: The Acropolis from the northwest (source: Studio Kontos).
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

I.A. THE ACROPOLIS AND MATERIAL CULTURE STUDIES

Although the Acropolis often appears in literature and in archaeological research as a product of high artistic quality and of great social and religious importance within the Athenian society of the 5th century BC, its position in modern Greek society and its role in more recent periods have been very little researched. The Athenian Acropolis, the only one spelled with a capital 'A', in contrast to all the other acropolises within or outside Greece, is a distinctive monument in many ways. First of all, as I intend to show (chapter II), it is intimately linked with the history of the Greek capital. Moreover, the Acropolis, particularly the Parthenon, are among the few monuments which can demonstrate a continuous use, and which are involved directly in the game of power and authority. In classical times it was linked with the hegemony of the Athenian city-state, in Christian times with Christianity, during the Ottoman occupation with Islam, and after the establishment of Athens as the Greek capital with the authority of the state. What makes the Acropolis unique and worth studying, however, is that, apart from being the ‘national’ monument of Greece, it is part of an international heritage representing international values and ideas.

The acquaintance of the Western world with classical antiquity developed gradually, first through literary ancient sources, such as Pausanias and Pliny, Roman copies of Greek classical art, some late Hellenistic sculpture, and subsequently through the descriptions of travellers to Greece and designs, such as those made by the British painters James Stuart and Nicholas Revett or the French architect Julien David Le Roy. Since the Renaissance, if not earlier, Greek classical studies have spread beyond Europe, and have become ‘the beloved heritage of many people around the world' (Lowenthal 1988). As an early example, Goethe, although he had never seen Greece, was so much identified with the classical Greek spirit that another representative of the Sturm und Drang movement, Schiller, wrote to him in 1794:

\[\text{\footnotesize\textsuperscript{1} For the relationship between Western travellers and Hellenism see also Leontis 1995.}\]
Since you were born German, since your Greek spirit found itself in this Northern place, you had no other choice than either becoming yourself a northern artist, or substituting with the power of contemplation what reality did not offer to you, namely to give birth to Greece from the inside and in a rational way (cited in Kondaratos 1994: 39).

As Kondaratos notes (ibid), even Romanticism with its anti-classical principles and its negation of the classical ideals did not manage to escape from the 'charm' of ancient Greece. It is typical that at the end of the 18th century, when Goethe and Schiller were publishing a periodical under the title ‘Die Propyläen’, the Romanticist Schlegel brothers were publishing a periodical under the equally classicist title ‘Athenäum’ (ibid: 42). Shelley, a prominent poet of English Romanticism, loved Greece so much as to claim in 1821 that ‘We are all Greeks. Our laws, our literature, our religion, our arts have their root in Greece’ (cited in Lowenthal 1988). Thus, along with folk legends, exotic cultures, and the Middle Ages, classical Greece remained an important source of inspiration for the Romanticists, although viewed under a different prism to that of classicism. Whilst for classicism Greek antiquity was ‘an eternal example, an imperishable life’, for Romanticism it was ‘something that is long gone and destroyed by time’. And it is this time that ‘deep inside provokes sadness and nostalgia, main features of Romanticism’ (Tsátsos, quoted in Kondaratos 1994: 43).

The diffusion of classical culture has made the monuments of classical antiquity the patrimony of a world expanding out of its homeland’s borders. Greek antiquities have been systematically and widely used in the name of international values. They do not only feature in museums internationally, but are even copied and have become emblems of cities far away from Greece (Figure 2). In the case of the Acropolis we have a heritage which has been contested by ‘the world’ since well before the establishment of the Greek state in 1830. Once the Greek state was born, the modern Greeks inherited – together with the Greek land – also the title to the ancient Greek heritage. Thus the Athenian Acropolis, ‘the corner stone of the Classical Greek era’, in becoming a ‘world monument’ also became the national monument of Greece par excellence. The question I address here is how these two (local and global) meanings

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2 See Tumikiotis (1994a) for extended research on the imitation and reproduction of the Parthenon’s architectural lines in monuments or private buildings internationally. Monuments of the Acropolis are not only copied within the western world. A replica of the Parthenon exists also in Sodo Shima, a small island in Japan, and it was built as a peace symbol after the tragedies in Hiroshima and Nagasaki (1973) (Hatziyiannáki 1993-1994).
of the same monument can co-exist and interrelate. More specifically, I intend to show how Greeks today try to show their difference by projecting their heritage, which is, however, still believed to be a ‘world heritage’. People all over the world, from the author Salman Rushdie (Figure 3) to the president of the United States, Bill Clinton (Figure 4), keep stating that they have a share in Greek heritage or even that they are Greeks.

The interplay between the global and the local is a vital issue for people around the world, and has accordingly become a subject of interest within the social sciences. Since the 1980s there has been growing interest among anthropologists in the future of the ‘local’ in an era of globalisation. We witness a resurgence of the nation and cultural differences striving to be declared in a world of dissipated boundaries. In this context, the question most frequently raised is whether the local will sustain its
cultural specificity or whether it will become assimilated and homogenised in the process of globalisation. A number of social theorists (Appadurai 1990; Clifford 1997; Lash and Friedman 1992; Miller 1998) have argued that meanings and values, as they move across borders become transformed and adapted to local cultures rather than being levelled out. In such an era, which on the one hand promotes the idea of a global community and on the other encourages national difference, it is interesting to examine the role played by a heritage like the classical Greek, which is considered to be both national and international. Here I will consider the Greek perspective on this relationship between the local and global features of classical Greek heritage.

A series of studies have set out to illustrate the process of objects becoming indigenised by local cultures as they move between peoples. Miller (1998), for example, has shown how Coca-Cola became an ethnic drink in Trinidad representing Black African identity in contrast to other, red drinks associated with Indianness. O’Hanlon’s study (1993) about the Whagi of New Guinea demonstrate how foreign advertisements or products have been used to express issues of particular local character. Other studies have focused on this local-global relationship with regard to tourist art. Steiner (1995) has shown how local peoples internalise foreigners’ ideas of traditional art and use them for their own interests, while several other studies investigate the local-global interaction in relation to the production of ‘primitive art’ (e.g. Price 1989; Morphy 1995).
This thesis follows the tradition of all these studies of ‘recycling’ and ‘indigenisation’ of objects, falling into the wider category of ‘material culture studies’ which aims at demonstrating the dynamic ways in which a material product of culture can reflect identities, practices, and values, can communicate meanings and influence people’s world-views and behaviours.

The interest of anthropology in material culture is as old as the discipline’s history, starting with evolutionism. The colonialist encounter with ‘primitive man’ resulted in a craze of collecting ‘traces’ of his material culture and in the establishment of major private or public collections to house the specimens.

In the 1920s, when fieldwork was introduced in anthropology as a primary methodological practice, the theoretical approach towards material culture changed. Rather than following an evolutionary scheme, ‘things’ were now seen as ‘tools’ in the service of human adaptation to different environments, and study focused on their utilitarian qualities.

After the 1960s, the introduction of structuralism revived the interest in material culture. Levi-Strauss’ application of the linguistic theoretical models of Saussure in anthropology revolutionised the study of objects by introducing the idea of ‘a language of things’. Things were treated as signs which reflected social relations. This
approach, however, was criticised as being static, failing to convey the dynamism of social relations in a historical perspective.\(^3\)

From the 1970s onwards – and as a reaction to the sterile formalism of structuralism – the importance of ‘practice’ and ‘agency’ has been emphasised, highlighting the interaction of peoples with structures (Ortner 1984).

As early as 1986 Igor Kopytoff argued that things have biographies in the same way people do, and that from the moment of their production they enter a life-cycle of various phases and social contexts. By tracing the biographies of things one could also trace their social lives and the multiple social meanings they acquire in space and time.

More recently Hoskins (1998), in her research in Sumba, Indonesia, showed how biographies of things are interconnected with peoples’ biographies and how by studying things one can study people. Being interested in tracing personal life histories, Hoskins found that the only way to do so was by asking people to talk about objects. The latter, conveying memories and experiences, were becoming the medium for people to construct their identities.

In the last two decades there have been a bulk of material culture studies arguing that objects are not just illustrations of human action, but are actually involved in the production of social realities, in the shaping of the norms that people follow and the values that they represent. In fact a new periodical, the Journal of Material Culture, was established in 1996 in order to promote this approach, as set out in its editorial article in its first issue (Miller and Tilley 1996). Objects and persons are linked in a dialectic process, whereby they transform or reproduce each other. The way people construct and make use of their material world has been described as a process of ‘objectification’ (see Miller 1987; Bourdieu 1977; cf. Giddens’ ‘structuration theory’ in Giddens 1984) in which – by making and using things – people construct and redefine themselves and their roles within a certain social setting.

Sites, or more generally places and landscapes, have often been the object of material culture studies (e.g. Bender 1993; Tilley 1994; Hirsch and O’Hanlon 1995; Lovell

\(^3\) For an extended review and a historical background of material culture studies see Tilley (forthcoming).
They have been examined as dynamic sites, witnessing and producing socio-political action. Such studies have emphasised that places and landscapes do not simply reflect, but also influence – if not produce – cultural activity. They constitute the very environment in which people live and act, and they thus contribute to the construction of identities and social relationships. In the present thesis I deal with a landscape marked by the presence of monuments. The materiality and the durability archaeological monuments convey make them appear immediate and tangible, whilst they constitute a reservoir of both personal and collective memories evoking 'the common origins' and experiences of a community. Being public, they can transmit messages to a wider audience. Such messages play a major role in constructing a group identity for a society, since they give to the society a sense of continuity, permanence and authenticity. It is this function of the archaeological monuments, together with their materiality and authenticity, which enables them to objectify and manipulate abstract concepts.

I agree with Gell's preference of an 'action-oriented approach', emphasising the mediatory role of objects in the social process in the way I will approach the Acropolis and classical antiquities in general. He suggests studying objects as 'agents', although he explains that 'things' are not 'self-sufficient' agents in the same sense that people are. However, they are 'an emanation or manifestation of agency [...], a mirror, vehicle, or channel of agency, and hence a source of such potent experiences of the "co-presence" of an agent as to make no difference' (1998: 20).

Following Gell, I intend to study the Acropolis as a 'vehicle of agency', which informs the ways Greeks understand their national identity. More specifically, I aim at investigating the way Greeks and the Acropolis are engaged in a dialectic process of objectification, forming, transforming, or reproducing each other. I will show that through the physical presence of the Acropolis, Greeks internalise perceptions of their national identity, and by using and acting upon it they reproduce or transform the ways they understand and define themselves in an international context. It becomes clear that my discussion of the Acropolis has to do with Greek collective memories and identities, in short with 'Greekness'. It is therefore necessary to introduce those studies providing the background for the issues on Greek national identity which will be most relevant to my work.
I.B. GLOBAL AND LOCAL HELLENISMS

The travel writer Patrick Leigh Fermor (1966) suggested that Greek identity consists of a dilemma between two archetypes, the one of *Hellene* and the other of *Romios*. For him *Hellene* and *Hellenism* represent the glories of the ancient Greek civilisation, while *Romios* and *Romioskini* are rather associated with Byzantium, and are linked with more familiar images of the Greek history. The *Hellene* sees Greece as part of Europe, while the *Romios* is an advocate of the Orient. *Hellenism* is the image the Greeks want to project outwards, while *Romioskini* is introspective.

From an anthropological perspective, Herzfeld (1982a; 1987) has discussed the dialectic of Greek identity as consisting of two extreme poles: at one end stands *Hellenism*, which he calls the ‘outside’ view of Greek culture. This is linked to the idealisation of ancient Greeks by Western Europeans, and it constitutes an imported view, adopted by the Greeks during the establishment of the Greek state in 1830. At the other end stands ‘*Romioskini*’, which he calls the ‘inside’ view of Greek culture (1987: 114). This is associated with the history of Greeks as part of the Byzantine and the Ottoman Empires, and is the view modern Greeks feel more at home with. Thus, according to Herzfeld, every Greek is ‘torn between two opposing stereotypes’: the one of *Hellenes* (idealised Hellenes of the Classical past) and the other of *Romiti* (Byzantine and Turkish Christians) (1987: 41).

The positioning of Greece between ‘Europe’ or, more generally, ‘the West’ and ‘the Orient’ is one that has pervaded discussions of Greek identity since the establishment of the Greek state. Throughout modern Greek history there are times when ‘the West’ has been associated with the ideas of progress and modernisation, virtues sought by Greece in its efforts to join the pace of the modern world. Especially during the early days of the new state it was believed that – through Europeanisation – Greece could reach out to its past and heritage. At other times, however, ‘the West’ has acquired negative connotations, as it has been perceived as a foreign presence hostile towards Greece. In these cases ‘the West’ is often juxtaposed to ‘the Orient’, which is considered to be the place where the roots of the Greek folk resides, the place which gave birth to the Orthodox Byzantine Empire. On the other hand, ‘the Orient’ has also been linked with backwardness and the Dark Ages of Turkish occupation (cf. Herzfeld 1987). Thus ‘the West’ and ‘the East’ have become loaded with various
meanings, according to historical, political, or cultural circumstances, and although they are not static concepts, they do retain some basic general features. ‘The West’, as the historian Élli Skopetéa has noted, has often been seen as a synonym of ‘the modern world’ (1992: 12) with all its connotations and interpretations. On the other hand, ‘the Orient’ has been used by Greeks to refer to what Greeks call ‘Our Orient’ (kath’imás Anatoli), ‘the borders of the West with the East from the East’s side’, (ibid: 13) or, according to the linguist Babiniotis (1998), Asia Minor and areas of Hellenism in the Orient, and in general the Orthodox Orient.

As the literary theorist Dimitris Tzióvas (1989: 51-52) notes, until 1922 the Greek cultural identity was introspective and the main issues for the Greek nation were those of unity and continuity. From 1923 onwards, Greek cultural identity became extrovert, and the main issue was the differentiation of the Greek from other nations and the projection of its cultural specificity (‘Greekness’ – Ellinikóttita). The generation of the 1930s tried to transcend polarities within Greek identity such as Romiós and Hellene, traditionalism and modernisation, etc., which were the outcomes of such introspective speculation. Representatives of the 1930s generation, such as Seféris and Theotokás, juxtaposed Greek Hellenism (Ellinikós Ellinismós) to European Hellenism (Evropaikós Ellinismós).

The 1930s generation used this juxtaposition to describe the interaction of Greek identity with Western Europe. Sixty years later, the social anthropologist Roger Just (1995) adopted the notions of ‘local’ and ‘global’ Hellenisms to discuss how Greeks internalise global cultural constructs portraying Greece as the birthplace of history and the cradle of civilisation. Just explained how ‘Western civilisation’ imported Hellenism back to the place where it was first born and he illustrated ways in which it was re-appropriated on a local level. I would like to explore this local-global relationship further, not just in terms of how the local translates global knowledge and constructions, but in terms of the extensive politics between the two. Moreover, I will try to elaborate on the nature of this local re-appropriation in relation to classical Greek heritage. The geographer David Lowenthal (1988) was the first to discuss the position of classical heritage as both Greek national and global heritage. He described the preoccupation of the West with the ancient Greek world and how the latter was adopted as Western/global heritage. He also showed how the Greeks, after the
establishment of the Greek state, re-evaluated and re-adopted Greek antiquity as their national heritage.

In this account of research on Greek identity I should also mention the work of the literary theorist Artemis Leontis. In her *Topographies of Hellenism* (1995) she traced the *logos* (discourse) of the Greek *topos* (place), the ways in which the notion of the Greek homeland is constructed through literature. Studying Western travellers’ accounts of Greece as well as texts of Greek literature, she illustrated the ways notions of Hellenism are produced by Greek and Western European discourses, and she made the distinction between ‘Hellenism’ (the concept of Hellenism produced in the West) and ‘Neohellenism’ (the concept of Hellenism produced in Greece since the establishment of the Greek state).

It becomes evident that the notion of Hellenism has many facets, a fact which has also lead to the distinction of categories such as ‘Neo-Hellenism’, ‘Greek and European’ or ‘local’ and ‘global’ Hellenism. I must note, however, that the notion of Hellenism is used in Greece to refer to Greek identity as a whole. Greeks normally use it as shorthand to refer to more than the ancient classical past. For example the Greek word for Greece is *Hellas* and Greeks are called *Hellenes*. Thus, *Hellenes* are not simply the mythical giants of the pre-independence period (Kakridis 1978) or the pagan Greek ancestors. Hellenism does not denote geographical space or chronological divisions. It declares a unity with common origins, language, religion, habits, and customs in both past and present. It is a concept that refers to the Greek presence as evidenced in terms of ideas, people, or material objects in both time and space.

As I indicated earlier, my work adopts the terms ‘local’ and ‘global’. By using these terms, one can understand the processes through which tensions such as ‘West and Orient’ or ‘Hellenism and Romiossíni’ are bound together for the construction of a strong Greek identity which is negotiated in the international arena. I would like to show that local and global interpretations of Hellenism are mutually defining and that the process of the building of Greek identity is intimately linked with their interrelation. The ‘local’ is part of the ‘global’ and the ‘global’ consists of many ‘locals’, (cf. Just 1995) and therefore the use of these terms enables us to demonstrate the dynamics between the two. I do not mean to undermine the significant role of the West (or Europe) and of the Orient, nor of the distinction of *Romiossíni* and
Hellenism in the understanding and conceptualisation of Greek identity. On the contrary, I want to include all these defining elements in this local-global framework.

I must stress that I do not use the terms ‘local’ and ‘global’ in order to imply that the relationship of Hellenism with ‘the world’ is only a product of the ‘era of globalisation’ as witnessed in the last few decades. The roots of a concept of global Hellenism is related to the quest for the cultural roots of the West from the Enlightenment onwards rather than the flows of people, money, information, and capital of the modern (Giddens 1990) or post-modern (Harvey 1989) era as experienced today. ‘Globalisation’ is believed to be a historical process, which for some (e.g. Robertson 1992: 58-60) predates modernity. Hellenism travelled around well before modernity. However, modernity enhanced Hellenism’s circulation around the world. Moreover, it was only when the Greek nation-state was established, that the relationship between local and global Hellenisms originated and it was only then that Greek heritage started to be ‘contested’ by both ‘the world’ and the Greek nation-state.

I.C. FIELDWORK IN ATHENS

In the introduction to her work on the Church of the Annunciation of Tinos, Jill Dubisch (1995), drawing on Clifford (1990: 64), underlines the difficulties of delineating the concept of the ‘field’. Past are the days, she says, ‘when anthropologists could describe small communities as if they formed self-contained units for analysis’. She explained that the people she met and the events that she encountered in the place where she did her fieldwork, belonged not only in that particular local context, but also within a national and international religious tradition, and that the people themselves constituted shifting populations of diverse origins (Dubisch 1995: 7).

In the case of the Acropolis, the difficulties in clearly demarcating ‘the field’ become even more evident because of the international character of the site as described earlier, which is accentuated by the increasing movement of people, ideas, information and capital in recent history. Keeping this in mind, I have used the Acropolis only as a setting for understanding behaviours, attitudes, and perceptions of
Athenians or Greeks in regard to the process of defining their identities and their position in a changing world. Moreover, I have also used examples of other classical antiquities where I felt that this might help in rendering a more complete image.

Dubisch’s idea was very clear to Marcus when he wrote his paper on ‘multi-sited ethnography’ (1995). Marcus claimed that anthropological research should move from the conventional single-sited ethnography to a multi-sited ethnography. In an era of globalisation where technology, finance, people, media and ideas cross frontiers, the multi-sited ethnography is more prepared to trace the circulation of cultural meanings and their (trans)formations on a local level. Marcus, describing the methodological profile of the multi-sited research (ibid: 105), explained that it is designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations, in which the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence, and he suggested a number of techniques through which the researcher could trace the movement of the object of study along different settings: one of them would be by ‘following the thing’. This would involve ‘tracing the circulation through different contexts of a manifestly material object of study (at least as initially conceived), such as commodities, gifts, money, works of art and intellectual property’.

I found Marcus’ paper congenial to my approach: the Acropolis is, after all, de-contextualised from the local system (Greece), and has become re-contextualised in a global system (the West). It is multi-sited both physically (e.g. the Parthenon marbles in Britain) and metaphorically (the ideals it represents are intimately linked with the ideals of Europe and the West). Therefore it gives the possibility of a comparative dimension in my methodological approach. Originally my aim was to examine the circulation of the Acropolis’ meanings in time (19th-20th centuries) and in space, e.g. in Britain and Greece. The original plan, however, was abandoned as the research was becoming too extended. Thus, I only looked at Greek attitudes towards and discourses about the Acropolis and traced the site’s cultural meanings across and within multiple areas of activity within Greece, e.g. education, tourism, archaeology etc. Although I did some participant observation of Greek visitors’ reactions to the Parthenon marbles at the British Museum, that was restricted to a few visits rather than the systematic fieldwork of my time in Athens. The results from these visits were not treated separately, but incorporated together with my other research for the presentation of
multiple discourses about the Acropolis. Thus, the Acropolis was not studied as a monument anchored and bounded on a particular site, but as one that is mobile and multiply situated. The aim was not to provide a holistic account of the Acropolis’ representation, but to show the polyphony of its cultural meanings among Greeks and the shaping of these meanings in relation to Greece’s position and reaction to what is going on world-wide. In doing so I also tried to keep a historical perspective, which would allow me to find similarities and differences in values, behaviours and perceptions also in earlier periods than the one under study.

I conducted my fieldwork in the place of my origin (Athens) during the years 1996-1997. This fact introduces a series of matters related to the issue of what is usually called ‘indigenous’, or ‘anthropology at home’. While there are anthropologists who believe that ‘every native or indigenous anthropology is a contradiction in terms’ (Hastrup 1998), there is an ever-increasing bulk of research classified as ‘anthropology at home’. A critique often addressed against ‘anthropology at home’ is the lack of distance that prevents ‘native’ anthropologists from having an objective and clear view of the ‘other’ and impedes ‘the balance between the emic and etic dimensions of the anthropological practice’ (Lett 1990, quoted in Gefou-Madianou 1998). However, ‘anthropology at home’ is not a standard term which can be taken for granted, and although it often refers to anthropology which is undertaken by researchers in the societies where they live and work, it needs to be continuously redefined according to the context and the circumstances in which it is used (Gefou-Madianou ibid: 406; cf. Strathern 1987). Moreover, concepts, such as ‘the other’, ‘the self’, as well as their interrelation, have a multiplicity of meanings. ‘The other’ is no longer conceived as a homogenous entity, but it is recognised as multi-vocal, multi-dimensional and, above all, culturally specific.

Within the context of Greek anthropology the above-raised points become very relevant. The interplay between the local and global aspects of Hellenism in particular has played an important role in the writing of Greek anthropology. Anthropology of Greece was introduced in Greece by Western anthropologists during the late 1950s. Their research formed the core on which the first generation of Greek anthropologists based their work. The production of anthropological research about Greece is then a
product of the same dialectic between local and global Hellenism which informs Greek identity today (cf. Herzfeld 1987).

It is this dialectic that causes Gefou-Madianou (1993: 48) to rightly wonder where the limits of 'the familiar' and 'the foreign' lie for the Greek anthropologist who comes to study Greek culture in Greece. She notes that together with the Greek culture as experienced by the Greek researcher in his/her country there is also the Greek culture which he/she studied during his/her school education or during his/her studies abroad. To Gefou-Madianou's 'Greek cultures' I would add one more: the one produced by Greek students but in a language other than the Greek one. What I experienced while writing this thesis is that writing about your own country in a foreign country and in a foreign language is already one way of distancing oneself from the 'home' culture.

During fieldwork I spoke to a range of Greek people, mainly from Athens, but also from other parts of Greece living in, or visiting, Athens, to learn the ways in which they think about and/or experience the Acropolis. In the beginning I tried to talk to people who were associated in one way or another with the Acropolis (e.g. archaeologists, tourist guides, etc.). I also paid several visits to the archaeological site, simply watching, or trying to engage in informal chats with visitors. As it turned out, however, all Greeks have an opinion about issues that concern the Acropolis. Furthermore, all have gone through the national educational system, and the Acropolis appears in the national curriculum in three different classes. Therefore, anybody had a right to express an opinion and, eventually, such qualitative fieldwork was done anywhere in Athens by just speaking to people that I met during the course of a day. Thus I spoke to a wide range of people, as for example archaeologists some of whom are involved in works on the Acropolis, tourist guides, left or right wing activists, teachers, students, intellectuals, arts people, ordinary people living near the Acropolis, ordinary people living far away from it etc. In addition to this, I tried to keep abreast of unusual events or any public debate or new city or state policies affecting the Acropolis (e.g. about the conservation works on the Acropolis, the issue of the new Acropolis Museum, the restitution of the Parthenon marbles, the question of whether to open the site of the Acropolis to the public on evenings with a full moon). These developments were drawn on to generate more specific talking points in initiating conversations. Apart from pre-arranged interviews with a tape-recorder, I
also brought up the subject casually and informally when possible. I also tried to arrange meetings where people, often of different professions and backgrounds, participated. The discussions were based on a series of open-ended questions which kept being enriched and varied according to the profile of the people who were participating. There were also other questions, which arose during the development of the discussions. I also showed people some photos and asked them to comment on them, for example advertisements using the Acropolis as a logo, VIPs on the Acropolis, cartoons, etc. This idea is owed to the work by Berger and Mohr (1989), who have highlighted the multiple interpretations a photo can allow, depending on interpreters’ backgrounds.

I found that the anthropological field research into what the Acropolis means to various people, and how these meanings are contested and negotiated in the present, is also helpful in developing models and ideas for pursuing similar questions historically. On the other hand, past uses and meanings of the Acropolis, discovered through historical research, also threw up questions and ideas I found interesting to discuss with informants, even if only to discover that they are no longer concerned about these matters. As my enquiry also included the meanings which the Acropolis has been attributed with in the past, I had to look at some written sources, which cover the period of the 19th and 20th centuries.

I approached both oral and written sources by doing a close reading of the them in relation to the conditions in which they were produced and their intended and unintended messages. My aim was to unravel some of the meanings which have been built up in association with the Acropolis over time and through its use, and see how they connect to certain social, political and ideological realities.

I would now like to draw special attention to some of my sources, such as education, archaeology, and the press. These sources originate and convey key discourses for the building of attitudes towards and perceptions of the Acropolis and classical antiquity in general.

As I already mentioned, all Greeks go through the national educational system, and the Acropolis appears in the curricula of three different classes: in the history of the 4th class of the primary school (In Ancient Times); in the history of the 1st class of the
secondary school (*History of Ancient Times until 30 BC*); and in the history of the 4th class of the secondary school (*Thematic History [Ancient and Byzantine]*). I therefore considered education as a key area for the building of attitudes towards and perceptions of the Acropolis and classical antiquity in general.

National educational systems constitute primary mechanisms through which the idea of the nation-state is established and reproduced. Schools, through the teaching of lessons such as history, language and geography, as well as through other school activities such as national celebrations, fieldtrips etc., legitimise and reproduce the nation-state’s authority and the main principle on which it has been founded: the identification of the political and cultural properties of a nation (Avdelá 1997).

Hristiá Kulúri (1988) showed the role the teaching of history and geography played for the Greek nation-state’s self-awareness as early as the second half of the 18th century. A more recent work (Fragudáki and Dragóna 1997) has revealed the role the educational system plays in contemporary Greece. As Avdelá (ibid) has noted, this is extremely centralised, as it does not only base teaching on one and only one book per lesson, but it also defines in very strict terms how it is supposed to be taught, thus not allowing much space for the teachers to apply their own educational methods and evaluations.

The history lesson plays a crucial role in the building of national identity, emphasising concepts of continuity and homogeneity within the Greek nation. In all history books the Acropolis is assigned to the chapter concerning the classical ages, as a product of the ‘Golden Age of Perikles’. Its photos appear in all the above mentioned schoolbooks. In the teachers' handbook of the Ministry of Education, the aims of teaching history at school are defined. Among them ‘the realisation of Greek continuity’ and ‘the cultivation of an original patriotic spirit’ (Ipurgío Ethnikís Pedías ke Thriskevmáton 1995-96: 26). In the chapter referring to the teaching of the ancient Greek language, some of the aims are: '[for the students] to understand and experience the values of the ancient Greek civilisation; especially to acquire the feeling of their responsibility as spiritual (*pnevmatikí*) people, so that they contribute to the building of a free and democratic life, to the social and cultural (*pnevmatikí*) development of the [Greek] people, and to the raising in every aspect of the standard of its life; to understand the uninterrupted continuity and presence of the Greek spirit
from the years of Homer until today and its immense contribution to the development of Europe and of humankind in general’ (ibid: 44-45).

Throughout this work I will refer to a number of compositions which students of four different classes of primary and secondary schools wrote for me as well as to the outcome of discussions I had with them at their schools in order to compare what they write and what they say. These are: the 6th class of an Athenian primary, privately managed and funded school (hereafter 6th PR), the 5th class of an Athenian, government-run secondary school (hereafter 5th GR), the 4th and the 6th classes of a secondary school in a village of Northern Greece (hereafter 4th and 6th GR respectively). The topic of the compositions was: ‘What is the meaning of the Acropolis today? Does it mean anything to you personally? Do you think that the Elgin marbles should come back to Greece?’ All compositions were written in class. After getting the compositions back I tried to visit the schools and talk to the children in order to have a comparative view of what they write and what they say, as well as to the teachers of some of the classes and to the owner of one of the schools. Throughout this work I will also refer to compositions of students whose schools I did not manage to visit, e.g. from the last class of a secondary school in a village of Northern Greece.

I am aware that the particular environment under which the students wrote and discussed the role of the Acropolis, as well as the topic of the composition, may have had a significant influence on what they did or did not express. This in itself is, however, a relevant discourse with its own variations, influenced by the educational system and the dominant ideology.

When one looks at the attitudes towards the Acropolis the first concern is to investigate the attitudes of those who are directly involved in decisions concerning its presentation and preservation, i.e. the archaeologists. Archaeology, as a discipline which claims to be specialist in the domain of the past and past remains, has a most important role to play in the shaping of attitudes towards the past. Archaeology is not purely a research enterprise. It is the means which provide the evidence through which the national past is supported and national claims gain credibility and ‘scientific justification’. It provides the ‘tangible links’ of the present to the past, through objects which serve more effectively the notion of cultural continuity, and
which create and reinforce the unity of a nation-state in time and space. It therefore participates actively in the political discourse and constructs national identity. In Greece in particular archaeology, and especially classical archaeology, played a decisive role in the state’s life, forming the ‘patriotic discipline’ of the nation.

Many organisations shape archaeological discourse. For the purposes of this research, I talked to various archaeologists specialising in classical or prehistoric archaeology, working in academia or the Archaeological Service, in the Acropolis’ or in other efories. Apart from the outcome of the conversations I had with them, what I also intend to discuss here are certain issues that are brought up in the discourse of the Archaeological Society at Athens (hereafter ASA) as demonstrated in the Society’s newsletter EDAE (from No 19: O Mendor).

The ASA is an example of an influential institution involved in the archaeological discourse from the establishment of the Greek state until today. Having a long history, the ASA bears and reflects elements of all the phases that gave Greek archaeology the face it has today. It is a private legal entity, sponsored in part by the state. When the Society was established in 1837 its aim was ‘to contribute to the recovery, the restoration and the completion of the antiquities in Greece’ (Kókku 1977: 99). At that initial point of the ASA’s history its members were intellectuals, including foreigners, who were considered friends of Greece and of antiquities. Most of them had considerable political power. For example Iákovos Rízos Nerulós, the first president of the Society (1837-1841), was the minister of Education. Alexandros Rízos Rangavis, the Secretary of the Society, was the Head of a Department in the Ministry of Education. Ioánnis Koléités, the second president of the Society (1843-1846), was also the Prime Minister of Greece etc.

One could say that the Society’s work has been complementary to that of the Greek Archaeological Service by conducting excavations and undertaking excavation reports as well as publications of archaeological research. It consists not only of

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4 The Archaeological Service falls under the authority of the Ministry of Culture and is the main body of the Greek archaeological management

5 Efories are the different departments in which the management of antiquities is organised in Greece.

6 In its first years (1989-1991) the newsletter was called ‘Informative Bulletin of the Archaeological Society’ (Enimerotikó Deltió Arheologikís Eterias). It is only since April 1991 (19) that its name was changed into O Mendor.
archaeologists, but also of upper middle class 'friends of antiquity' coming from various disciplines.

I used several other written sources apart from the ASA's newsletter and student compositions. I drew a significant amount of data from a wide range of newspapers covering the period 1987-1997. The issues I was interested in were not just those related to the Acropolis, but also others concerning classical antiquities in general, or discussions about Greekness. For the news of the period 1977-1994 I used the archive of newspaper clippings referring to archaeological issues kept in the Library of the American Archaeological School at Athens. The rest were newspapers that I, or friends, bought on a daily basis, balancing my attention over a wide spectrum of Greek print-media.

As Skopetéa notes in the introduction of her work (1988), newspapers render the spirit of an age much more efficiently than a book, which is constrained to internal consistency. Moreover, the casual tone of newspaper discourse is more valuable than the elaborately thought out argumentation of authored books. Newspaper discourse, being addressed to a mass audience, is quite important in shaping and reproducing ideas and values. Obviously, news does not consist of 'facts' but is an ideological interpretation of events employing a complex set of criteria and mechanisms. As a number of critical linguists have pointed out (e.g. Fowler 1991, Hall 1978, Philo 1983), everyday local or global events are subject to processes of selection and interpretation according to various political, economic and social factors before they eventually become 'news'. In addition, the linguistic features that newspapers use, like typographical choices or devices, styles of writing, and stereotypes, are crucial in the way social realities are constructed.

My aim was to seek polyphony. However, I found that there was a certain uniformity and consensus in the various newspapers' discourses with regard to the importance of the Acropolis. Trying to find an alternative discourse questioning this opinion, I decided to go through a fortnightly left-wing magazine interested in contemporary political and social issues, Andi (1974- today). Moreover I reviewed two art periodicals, Epitheorisi Téhnis (1954-1967) and Zygos (1955-1985)\(^7\). The first one is

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\(^7\) See Kalpaxis (1997a) for an extended discussion on Epitheorisi Téhnis' ideological profile in relation to classical antiquity.
an intellectual, broadly left-oriented periodical, while the second one is a periodical interested especially in the arts. Finally, I went through *Ta Athinaikà* (1955-today), the periodical of ‘the Society of Athenians’, an elite club in which only people who can trace their family history in Athens back at least one hundred years can be registered. The periodical has an ethnographic character and publishes stories, personal memories, poems, etc. and it aims to preserve memories of old Athens.

Apart from the oral and written material, I also collected visual material from books, the press or archives (the Benaki Museum, the Greek Literature and History Archive (ELIA), the Megaloikonomu photographic archive, and other personal archives). This includes photos, political posters, advertisements and cartoons. The latter I got either out of press cuttings or directly from the cartoonists. I found them very useful, as they sum up with economy and immediacy the pulse of a social reality.

My original aim was to present all this material in the form of separate discourses, namely those of the newspapers, of the cartoons, of the archaeologists, of the schools, and so on. The various visual data could form a chapter of their own, based on methods and theories of visual anthropology and material culture. In the process of dealing with the collected material I found so many similarities in the several discourses, however, that I finally decided to incorporate them under the discussion of particular theoretical issues, such as commodification, sacredness, etc.

The decision to undertake an ethnography in such a broad area as Athens instead of a small community or group of people resulted in a number of restrictions as far as the content of the fieldwork is concerned. One of them was that I was not in constant contact with my informants. In fact I interviewed some of them only once. Therefore, I can not verify whether what they say is what they actually do or how they act upon their opinions in their everyday life. My purpose, however, is not only to see whether what they say is what they really do, but also to analyse what they say and how say it. Language is the repository of a vast accumulation of experiences, values and meanings, while at the same time it influences people’s thoughts and practices. Thus, far from ‘neutrally’ reflecting social reality and empirical facts, language intervenes in ‘the social construction of reality’ (Berger and Luckman, 1976), which makes it an important tool for the study of culture.
I.D. OUTLINE OF THE FOLLOWING CHAPTERS

The meanings the Acropolis has for Greeks today have to be understood in conjunction with its role in various other phases of Greek history. Before undertaking the main discussion I will therefore give a short historical outline (chapter II) aiming at providing the framework for the reader to assess the meanings of the Acropolis as unravelled in the course of the thesis.

In chapter III my aim is to show how Greek national identity is materialised in the form of the Acropolis. I demonstrate how the site of the Acropolis, according to the circumstances, becomes transformed into key concepts of nationalism such as the flag, the territory, the history, the national body etc. This transformation often takes the form of metaphors or metonymies, which are useful to illustrate and analyse the ways in which the Greeks perceive and describe issues of national politics by transferring them into an everyday discourse. I also show how, through such tropes, the Acropolis becomes the meeting point of classical and contemporary, diasporic and mainland Hellenisms, thus providing a long-lasting, unifying and tangible identity.

After having discussed the ways in which Greek identity is objectified in the site of the Acropolis, I intend to show (chapter IV) how under this material form, it is negotiated on an international level. I use case studies concerning ‘exportation’, repatriation or revival of Greek heritage as mechanisms within which Greece attempts to write its history, name its property and define its place on the world map.

Chapter V explores a further aspect of the paradoxical relationship of the local and global meanings of Greek heritage. That is the mass consumption of what Greeks consider ‘inalienable wealth’. For my discussion I use three case studies. The first one is the outrage a Coca-Cola advertisement provoked by showing Coca-Cola bottles replacing the columns of the Parthenon. The second are the Greek reactions to the contest between Athens and Atlanta over the hosting of the Olympic Games in 1996. The third example is the acceptance of the Greek government to assign an ancient theatre of Athens for the presentation of a fashion show by the American designer Calvin Klein. All three examples are cases where global consumption threatens local inalienable wealth and they serve as metaphors of wider ideological relationships between Greece and the West. The last section of that chapter discusses some ideas
about tourism in Greece as a meeting point of local and global attitudes towards
Greek heritage.

Chapter VI discusses the ways in which the Acropolis is imbued with sacredness. I
examine certain aspects of this sacredness and the aesthetics they create, and I
investigate ways in which people perceive, use and reproduce such concepts of
sacredness in connection with the Acropolis. I demonstrate how the concept of
sacredness serves not only as a means of differentiation of the Greek national self in
relation to ‘the others’, but also as a tool of social groups and individuals in their
resistance against the state.

In the Conclusions (chapter VII) I sum up the main issues and speculate on more
general topics arising from the preceding chapters.
CHAPTER II. AN HISTORICAL OUTLINE

It is necessary here for us to revisit the history of the Acropolis in the course of Greek history in general, not for the purpose of giving a detailed account of the entire history of Greece, but in order to enable us to put people's attitudes and perceptions of the Acropolis into a historical perspective. Throughout the thesis I will refer to earlier uses of the Acropolis. The multiple meanings of the Acropolis today can only be fully understood in connection with the ways in which it has participated in different phases of Greek history. This chapter thus serves as a reference which will help to capture some basic shared knowledge of - and emotions towards - the past held by the Greeks.

II.A. EARLY HISTORY

In the 'Clouds' by Aristophanes (verses 299-310) the virgins of the chorus sing the following verses when they come down to Athens:

Come then with me,
Daughters of Mist, to the land of the free.
Come to the people whom Pallas hath blest,
Come to the soil where mysteries rest;
Come, where the glorified Temple invites
The pure to partake of its mystical rites:
Holy the gifts that are brought to the Gods,
Shrines with festoons and with garlands are crowned,
Pilgrims resort to the sacred abodes,
Gorgeous the festivals all the year round.

(The Loeb Classical Library translation)

As Karúzos notes (Petrákos 1995: 290), these verses were written in 423 BC, nine years after the Parthenon and the Propylaea were built in Athens, and while the Erechtheion was still under construction. In the above verses we can feel the poet's pride and admiration for the buildings and the other works of art in Athens, which have inspired many subsequent generations and cultures. Although these buildings

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8 For the section on the early history of the Acropolis I have mainly used Brúskari (1990 and 1996)
were the product of the 5th century BC, a happy historical moment in Athens’ history, they have deep religious and cultural roots in much earlier times.

The rocky hill of the Acropolis with its natural fortification and springs was settled as early as the Neolithic period (ca 6000 – ca 3000 BC). In the late Bronze age or Mycenaean period (ca 1650-1100 BC) the Acropolis was the residence of the ruler of a settlement expanded around the Acropolis’ hill and organised into several large villages, a fact which explains the plural of the name Athens (in ancient Greek *Athenai*). It seems that over time the power of the Athenian ruler increased, and in the 14th century BC Athens dominated the other cities of Attica, which were peacefully unified under its central administration. The Acropolis thus became an important political centre. Towards the end of the Mycenaean period, the fear of possible invasions, as witnessed in other parts of Greece, forced the Athenians to build strong walls around the Acropolis. At those times the ruler of Athens was also the religious leader of its people, and his palace was also the place where the main local deity of fertility – an early figure of goddess Athena – was worshipped.

Figure 5: The Parthenon viewed from the southwest. The Roman theatre of Herodes Atticus features in the foreground. (source: Brůskari 1990)
When aristocracy replaced the monarchy after the Dorian invasion in 1100 BC, the administrative seat was transferred into the town and the Acropolis was dedicated exclusively to worshipping. In the 8th century BC a temple dedicated to Athena, housing the goddess’ wooden statue, was built partly on the relics of the Mycenaean palace. In the 6th century BC this temple was replaced by a new and bigger one – the so-called ‘ancient temple’. It was dedicated also to Athena but it was built to worship another feature of the goddess’s nature: not the peaceful, agrarian one, but an armed one, thus being protector of the city of Athens, which in those years was developing her power. Athens became one of the major centres of Hellenism, and Athena acquired more and more worshippers who flooded the sacred site with rich offerings.

After their glorious victory against the Persians at the battle of Marathon (490 BC) the Athenians’ power increased. As a sign of their gratitude for their goddess’s support they decided to renew the ‘first Parthenon’. They did not succeed in materialising their goals, however, as the Persians invaded Greece in 480 BC, occupied Athens, and devastated the hill. Two years later the Athenians finally returned victoriously to their city after the naval battle against the Persians in Salamis only to find their temples and
their offerings in ruins. In the years to follow Athens re-established its dominance within the Greek world and became the head of the ‘Anti-Persian Alliance’ of the Greek cities. Perikles (ca 490-429 BC), the prominent figure who reinforced and established democracy in Athens, conceived of a major project in order to increase the political and cultural power of Athens within the Greek-speaking world. He aimed for a long-term building program with monuments which would glorify Athens within and beyond Greece. The financial expenses of the project were supported not only by the riches of Athens, but also by the money of the Anti-Persian Alliance’s treasury.

The first monument of the project was the Parthenon as we know it today (Figure 5). Its building by Iktinos and Kallikrates started in 447 and finished in 438 BC, while its decoration by the sculptor Pheidias, head of numerous artists and workers, lasted until 432. The Parthenon was not just a sacred site but it also stood for the dominant position of Athens in the ancient Greek world. At the same time it was the product of a long history of aesthetic quests, which reached their peak in the Age of Perikles. When the Parthenon was completed in 432 BC, it was already ‘ancient’, says Plutarch

Figure 7: Part of the Erechtheion viewed from the southeast. (source: Brůskari 1990)
(ca 46-120); in other words, 'classic' (Plutarch, Life of Pericles 13, 5). 437 was the year when the building of the Propylaea, the monumental entrance to the Acropolis, began. It was interrupted, however, because of the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War (431 BC) between Athens and Sparta and their respective allies. Perikles died in 429 BC. His project, however, was continued thanks to happier circumstances sealed with Nikias' peace in 421. The temple of Athena Nike was built between the years 425 and 421 (Figure 6). In 421 the building of the Erechtheion (Figure 7) began, a temple following architectural lines very unusual in ancient Greek temples. The Erechtheion was the most reverent sanctuary of the Acropolis. It was dedicated to Athena and Poseidon, the two main deities of Athens, yet it also housed relics of ancient worship, as well as the old sacred statue of Athena. Its building, however, was interrupted by the Expedition to Sicily and was finally completed between the years 409 and 406.

Figure 8: The site of the Acropolis with the Turkish settlement in the second half of the 18th century, when the site was still a Turkish fortress (source: Papageorgiou-Venetas 1994).

In the following years no other building was built on the Acropolis, apart from the small temple dedicated to Rome and Augustus probably around 17-10 BC. During the Roman occupation the Acropolis was among the very few monuments not stripped of
ornaments and offerings for the decoration of Rome’s public buildings or villas of Roman officials.

On the contrary, the plundering and the destruction of the pagan relics began in the Christian era. The Parthenon became a church dedicated to St Sophia, while the Erechtheion was also transformed into a church dedicated to the Virgin Mary. In the 6th and 10th centuries respectively two more churches were established in the Propylaea.

![Figure 9: The bombardment of the Acropolis by Morosini (source: Wyatt Davenport and the editors of Time-Life Books 1978).](image)

In the years between 1204 and 1456 the Acropolis, as the seat of the Frankish conquerors, with their palace installed in the Erechtheion, was exclusively used as a fortress, and the Parthenon became a Roman Catholic Church.

When the Ottomans took over Athens in 1456, they transformed the Parthenon into a mosque and added a minaret in its northwest corner, while the Erechtheion became the residence of the Ottoman administrator’s harem (Figure 8). In 1686, faced with the danger of the Venetian army’s intrusion, the Ottomans decided to further fortify the Acropolis. They did so by using building material from the temple of Athena Nike, which was demolished for this reason. When the Venetian army, under the lead
of Morosini, finally bombarded the Acropolis the following year, the Parthenon, where the Ottomans had kept their gunpowder, was blown up and the monument was, to a large extent, destroyed (Figure 9). The Turkish administrator of the castle finally surrendered. It is not verified when the Turks came back to Greece, although in 1708 (some read it as 1808), an inscription on the marble of Erechtheion reports on the construction of a new gate to the Acropolis upon the command of a Turkish voivod of Athens.

From the 18th century more and more Western Europeans visited Greece and the Acropolis became more widely known, while it also fell victim to the collectors' zeal. It was within this spirit that Lord Elgin, the British ambassador to Constantinople, removed a great part of the Parthenon's sculptures not destroyed by Morosini's bomb. He also removed a column, a Caryatid (one of the female statues supporting the roof of the southern part of Erechtheion's edifice) and several other sculptures. This group of artworks was sold to the British Museum and is known today as the 'Elgin marbles'.

II.B. THE NATIONAL ERA

The Acropolis also has a more recent history intimately related with the life of the Greek capital. Although there are many other archaeological relics and monuments highlighting the history of ancient Athens, the Acropolis was the first site to be preserved and excavated, and it has always received special treatment and attention compared to other archaeological sites in the area. In the organisation and management of antiquities in different departments (efories), the Acropolis is the only monument that commands an eforia of its own. In the long process of the human intervention on the Acropolis landscape after the establishment of the Greek state, we can define certain periods of major and direct human impact.

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9 Voivods were representatives of the Sultan or other state officials, holding administrative posts in the provinces of the Ottoman Empire.
II.B.1. The Establishment of the Greek State

The site of the Acropolis is linked to the establishment of Athens as capital of Greece in 1834. When the question of which city should claim the right to become the capital of the new state arose, the choice was made not because of Athens’ geographical position, nor for any other practical reasons. It was its name, linked with the glory of the classical world, that was enough to justify such a choice (Politis 1993: 75, 76; McNeal 1991: 60). The European Powers played a major role in shaping the political, ideological and socio-economic framework within which the War of Independence took place. It is not accidental that classical antiquity, which was selected to be the new nation's most prominent heritage, was identified as the epitome of democracy, arts and sciences by the major European Powers who were to support the Greek nation's independence. Classical antiquity had regained its soil in the form of the Greek state, and ancient Greeks had found their ‘legitimate descendants’ in the face of modern Greeks. The monument epitomising that glory was the Acropolis. Athens was the city laid at the foot of this site, which had to be restored in its classical form. It was in that context that the architects Kleanthis and Schaubert designed the first urban plan of Athens, which had to be ‘equal to the ancient glory and glamour of this city’ (Kókku 1977: 56). The plan had provided for keeping ‘the most important part of the city’ (i.e. the area around the Acropolis) free for excavations.\footnote{However, protests by inhabitants of the area and especially by chieftains who had played a leading part in the War of Independence and who had bought land in that area, did not permit the appropriation of the land for archaeological research.}

During the War of Independence two sieges of the Acropolis took place, the first one by the Ottomans (1822-1827) and the second by the Greeks (1827-1833), devastating the Acropolis' hilltop and seriously damaging the ancient monuments. The first measures for the preservation of classical antiquities were instituted from the very beginning of the new state. The Acropolis, in particular, became a subject of special concern. In 1834 the Bavarian architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel suggested a plan according to which the young king’s palace should be built among the classical ruins on the Acropolis (Figure 10). Schinkel’s ambitious idea did not materialise in the end, and the Acropolis was to be preserved as an archaeological site. The symbolic opening of the restoration works took place in a ceremony that took place in the summer of 1834 on the Acropolis. The classicist architect Leo von Klenze placed one
of the column drums back in its original position and addressed the new king of Greece, Otto, who was present in the ceremony, with the following words (Tsigakou 1981: 63):

[When the works began] the shadows of those great spirits who until then had suspected their imminent destruction in any stroke of an axe or the sound of the workers' voices, rose from their peaceful tombs and raised their arms above these exalted ruins as if trying to protect them. Thus everything was against our operations. The levers broke, the workers fell ill, the masons believed that the works ought to be suspended. But O!, the blue flag of hope appeared on the distant horizon: the king was coming with his councillors in order to undertake the work of rescue...and, as if by a miracle, those gigantic marbles began to obey the masons and harmonise under the sound of the hymns that saluted the king.

1834 was also the year when young Otto had arrived from Bavaria to take office as king of Greece. Thus, for Klenze, the restoration works on the Acropolis symbolically coincided with the beginning of Otto’s task of restoring the modern Greek state itself.

This first period is marked by the efforts of the Greek archaeologists with their Bavarian advisors to release the Acropolis site from any relics representing eras other than the classical one. All later monuments (medieval, Turkish, and early modern) were demolished in the interest of preserving only the monuments of the 5th century BC.
II.B.2. The Revival of the Two-Headed Eagle and the Reconciliation of the Classical and the Byzantine Past

When the Greek state was established, its boundaries left out a large number of people who thought of themselves as Greeks. The inability of incorporating all these Greeks in the new state, which had as a consequence the impossibility of identifying the Greek nation with the Greek state, created hopes for the revival of the Byzantine Empire which would include the entire Greek nation. These hopes found their expression in the concept of the Great Idea (Megáli Íděa) that marked Greek history during the second half of the 19th and the first two decades of the 20th century. Up until that point, Greek history was seen to have only two periods (the classical and the present) with a huge gap between them (Dimarás 1989: 402). A new three-age scheme appeared where classical antiquity, Byzantium, and modern Greece, shared in glory and importance. This new scheme was also dictated by several external developments: Europe did not show the same philhellenic attitude any more, so Greeks needed to renovate their cultural orientation in the eyes of Europe; dangers also came from other Balkan ethnicities which were forming their national consciousnesses and claiming part of the Ottoman land. Moreover, in 19th century Europe, under the appearance of Romantic concepts of history, historicism emerged. This viewed the past not as an autonomous entity in the way the Enlightenment had done, but as an inherent part of a living organism, i.e. the nation, which also had a present and a future. Thus, the study of history began to favour periods like the Greek medieval (Byzantine) era. The need for such an emphasis was felt even more strongly after 1830, when the Austrian historian Fallmerayer questioned whether the modern Greeks were the descendants of the ancient Greeks. His theory, which obtained supporters in Europe, created a strong disturbance in the worldview of modern Greeks. The gap between the ancient and modern worlds, which Fallmerayer’s theory was creating, had to be bridged (Polístis 1993).

Konstandmos Paparrigópulos was the principal Greek historian who theorised this unity, which was destined to become the basic element of the modern Greek consciousness (ibid). It was that unity that allowed him to make the comparison

11 The ‘Great Idea’ is a multi-faceted concept. It was a term introduced by the Greek Prime Minister Kolótis in 1844. The term acquired various meanings and dimensions. It could either refer to territorial expansion of Greece, or to its cultural regeneration and domination in the East or to the Greek state’s re-organisation (Polístis 1993: 62-63; Skopetá 1988).
between the Parthenon as the representative of classical antiquity, and St Sofia, the Christian church of Constantinople, as the representative of Byzantium, and call them ‘half-brothers’ (Dimarás 1970: 144). The archaeological policy changed also around that time. Systematic archaeological excavations were extended beyond the area of the Acropolis, aiming to reveal other ‘important’ sites highlighting the public life of the 5th century BC, like the cemetery of Kerameikos, the Athenian Agora, and the ancient theatres. It is revealing that in these excavations monuments of later periods were no longer demolished in the excavated sites. The Byzantine past had won a position in the Greek history and had become worthy of preserving and remembering.

II.B.3. Preparing for the 20th Century

This period is marked by the premierships of Harflaos Trikúpis (the first one in 1880), whose principal aim was the modernisation of Greece’s infrastructure. He sought to strengthen Greece politically and economically before engaging in irredentist adventures. He encouraged industrialisation, improved communications through railway construction and the building of the Corinth canal, and modernised the army (Clogg 1992: 69). While the previous period was marked by the affinity to the ancestors and the idea of the nation as being intimately connected to the past, this new era opened up a new ideology which embraced also the future, the modernisation and the recovery of the state. However, the onerous terms of the foreign loans for the realisation of the above works created long-term debts which finally resulted in the declaration of the Greek state’s bankruptcy in 1893 (Svorónos 1994: 104). In 1894, along the spirit of these difficult times, the Greek poet Kostís Palamás, the major representative of the so called ‘generation of the ’80s’ (yenídá tu ’80), went to the Acropolis on a moonlit night to contemplate ‘the times in which reality is so wild and so mean to our country’ and lamented ‘the heavy sleep to which the Greek Glory has given herself in our days’ (Palamás, Acrópolis Esperíná cited in Aryirú 1994).

Regarding the site of the Acropolis, this period is marked by the management of the Greek archaeological heritage by Panayótis Kavvadías (1850-1928) who was General

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12 The ‘generation of the ’80s’ consisted of those intellectuals and artists who encapsulated and fully absorbed Paparrigópulos’ three-age scheme bridging the gap between ancient and present times and favouring also the Byzantine era.
Superintendent (*yenikós éforos*) of Antiquities between 1885-1922. The interventions that took place in that period coincided with the general climate of economic improvement and modernisation introduced by Trikúpis’ government. While the restorations of the years 1835-1885 were undertaken by enthusiastic, though amateur, archaeologists who applied empirical and improvised methods, this new period encouraged a ‘scientific’ approach, whereby the works were supervised by trained, multidisciplinary, and international committees (Mallouchou-Tufano 2000). During 1899-1933 Nikólaos Balános supervised a major restoration project. This was the first systematic project that was undertaken on the Acropolis using modern technological methods. Despite the scientific specifications, however, Balános’ work proved disastrous for the Acropolis’ monuments. Balános wanted to restore the ancient monuments to their lost grandeur, and he proceeded with the relocation of architectural elements, which, however, proved to be arbitrary. Thus, his interventions led to the loss of the original structure of the monuments. Being a civil engineer, Balános lacked archaeological knowledge and ignored the structural statics of ancient Greek temples. Also, his application of modern technology proved to be fatal for the buildings. The iron joints that he used for strengthening provoked oxidation of the marbles, which eventually began to crack and break (Mallouchou-Tufano 1994: 83-84).

II.B.4. The 1930s Generation and the Regeneration of ‘Greekness’

Greece emerged victorious from the Balkan Wars of 1912-13. In 1915, the ‘Entente Powers’ (Britain, France and Russia) promised important territorial concessions in Asia Minor in their efforts to bring Greece to their side. The realisation of the Great Idea seemed to be close. In the process, however, Greece found itself involved in a confrontation (1919-1922) with the forces of the Nationalist Turkish Movement (*Neóturki*), who under the leadership of Kemal Atatürk aspired to create an independent and modernised Turkish state. Thus, what was meant to result in the materialisation of ‘the Greece of the two continents [Europe and Asia] and the five seas [Ionian, Aegean, Mediterranean, Marmaras, Black Sea]’ (Clogg 1992: 97) resulted in a big disaster which has since been known as ‘the Asia Minor

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13 An *éforos* is the head of an *éforia*.  

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Catastrophe’, and in a vast exchange of Greek and Turkish populations between the two countries. The collapse of ‘the Great Idea’ was a blow to Greek identity. In the general climate of disaster and disillusionment, however, a group of Greek intellectuals and artists with different backgrounds, who have become known by the name ‘generation of the 30s’ (yeniâ tu ’30) appeared. They felt the need for regeneration and began to contemplate the different paths that Greece had to follow in order to come to terms with the crisis and to rejuvenate itself.

In the early 20th century Western European artistic and intellectual circles appear to turn against classical norms. Not only did they push classical paragons aside, but they also often mocked them. The futurist Marinetti, in his manifesto addressed to the young people of Greece, invited them to turn their backs on the Acropolis and wondered ironically: ‘If the Parthenon looks nice as it stands on the top of the Acropolis, will it, however, retain its grandeur in the eyes of a Greek pilot who flies at a height of 3000 feet?’ (Lidakis 1994: 245) An indicative Greek response to these stances expressed by some leading intellectuals and artists of that period can be summed up in the words of Theotokás, a representative of the ‘generation of the ’30s’: ‘An aeroplane flying in the Greek sky, over the Parthenon, gives off a new harmony which has not yet been conceived by anyone. [...] An aesthetics is being formed genuinely in the air we breathe’ (Vitti 1977: 41). In Greece the acquaintance with these new trends does not result in the renunciation of antiquity, but its reconciliation with modernity. We must note, however, that even in Western Europe classical antiquity still plays a significant role, like for example in the works of Picasso, De Chirico, or even in the work of the militant modernist Le Corbusier (Kondarátos 1994: 47-48), who restructured classical values on a different basis.

In 1936-1940, within the general climate of fascism in central Europe, the dictatorship of Ioannis Metaxas, known as ‘the Third Hellenic Civilisation’ (a term borrowed from Hitler’s Third Reich (Clogg 1992: 119)), was established in Greece implying that the two previous civilisations were the ancient Greek and the Byzantine. During that period, classical antiquity regained its heroic dimensions (Ioannídís 1988). For example, in 1934 Athens celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the revival of the Olympic Games, and a conference was organised in Greece by the International Olympic Committee. A glorious ceremony took place on the Acropolis, including the
reciting of Renan’s ‘Hymn to the Acropolis’ and the crowning of the flags of the forty-two countries participating in the revival of the Olympic Games with laurel wreaths. The ceremony on the Acropolis was followed by another one in the Panathenaic Stadium, organised by the Greek Olympic Committee. There, before the eyes of the audience, the Minoan, Classical, Byzantine, and contemporary Hellenisms paraded. The aim was to remind both local and foreign visitors of the historical background of the Olympic Games (Panorama tua [20u] eóna).

II.B.5. The War and its Aftermath

During WWII the Acropolis’ function as the symbolic fortress of Athens was accentuated (Figure 11). The German occupation of Athens was officially signified by the raising of the German flag on the site and the legendary suicide of the Greek soldier who until that time was guarding the Greek flag on the Acropolis hill. The resistance to the German occupation was manifested in the removal of the flag by two young Greeks (see chapter III).

Figure 11: Poster of the Greek National Liberation Front (EAM, the major resistance organisation during the Nazi occupation in Greece), with the subtitle ‘all on a war footing!’ The Acropolis features in the background (source: Karahristos 1984).

The end of WWII did not bring peace to Greece. A civil war broke out between communists and anti-communists (ethnikófrones), which was to last from 1946 until 1949. Makríonisos, an island which served as a place of internal exile for many

14 I thank Fótos Lambrinós for providing access to this history documentary series.
thousands of political prisoners from 1946 up to the 60s, was called ‘The new Parthenon’ by the authorities (Valétas 1975; cf. Hamilakis and Yalouri 1996), because there the prisoners were forced to build replicas of the Parthenon (Figure 12). They were also forced to build replicas of the Erechtheion (Kútsiku 1984: 87) and of St Sofia (Leontis 1995: 221). Makrónisos was also called the ‘National Baptismal Font’ by governmental officials (ibid). They considered Makrónisos to be the place where ‘errant’ Greeks would be cleansed of their political sins and helped to re-approach the glorious past spirit from which they had strayed, thus regaining their Greekness (Rodocanachi 1949: 6). Makrónisos was perceived as ‘a national civilising capital, which has emerged through the struggle of the violent forces of the Slavocommunist darkness against the forces of freedom which were born from the spirit of ancient Greek philosophy’ (photographic Album of Makrónisos 1949: 6).

Figure 12: Political prisoners in Makrónisos building a Parthenon (source: Kútsiku 1984: 86).

The 1950s interventions on the Acropolis were linked with the developmental and ideological aims of post-war and post-civil-war Greece and correspond to the demands of the mass tourism that appeared in Greece at that time (Mallouchou-Tufano 2000). Greek tourism, in its initial stages, was conceived in a romantic way. The only intervention in the Acropolis’ landscape was the attempt by the architect Dimítris Pikiónis to unify morphologically the sites around the Acropolis. Pikiónis shaped his perceptions about ‘Greekness’ during the 1930s generation. However, he only applied them in the 1950s. Two spiral paths were shaped on two hills which stand opposite one another, the Acropolis and the Philopappos. The first one gives access to the site of the Acropolis, while the other carries the visitor away from the
Acropolis’ hill and takes him/her to the levelled hilltop of Philopappos from where the Acropolis’ site can be viewed. Pikióinis’ plan was the first to define space not with constant reference to the ancient monuments, but in relation to the natural landscape as a whole (Kotiónis 1994: 13). Pikióinis used decorative elements from earlier Greek traditions and incorporated them in his works on the ancient site, like in the example of the cobbled paths, following traditions from Epirus, or the tiles that he used for the church of St Dimitris Loumbardiaris on the Philopappos hill. He also incorporated real fragments of either ancient or later traditional pots and sculptures in his landscaping works.

Figure 13: Political posters (1970-1974) by G. Aryirákis against the military dictatorship (source: Karahristos 1984).

Particular reference should be made to the colonels’ dictatorship in Greece between 1967 and 1974 (Figure 13). Like Metaxás’ authoritarian regime, the dictatorship’s ideology tried to incarnate the ‘Helleno-Christian ideal’. Classical art became committed art, manipulated for the interests of the authoritarian ideology. A series of feasts at the Panathenaic Stadium of Athens organised by the dictators, celebrated the various facets of Greek civilisation (Figure 14). Young Greeks dressed up as ancient classical citizens, Byzantine chieftains, Greek soldiers from WWII, and folklore figures participated in parades, chariot races and representations of battles. Moreover, from 1970 until 1972 the dictatorship undertook the project (known as To Táma) of building a church equal in glory to St Sofia (Kútsiku 1984: 98). The church was planned to be built on Turkovúnia, a hill with a view of the Acropolis, thus competing with the ancient monuments in glory.
II.B.6. Towards a Democratic Pluralism

The figure who undertook the task to transfer Greece from the junta to a pluralist democratic regime was Konstandinos Karamanlis who held the premiership of Greece from 1974 until 1980. As early as 1961 the European Community had provided for the possibility of Greece joining the EC in 1984. Karamanlis, however, seeing membership as a guarantor of political stability, decided to push for speedier admission and advertised the whole project with the motto 'Greece belongs in the West'. To this motto, the political opposition of PASOK (Panhellenic Socialist Movement), under the leadership of Andreas Papandreou, replied with the slogan 'Greece belongs to the Greeks' (Clogg 1992: 179), presenting the ambition of joining the EC as one that was solely in the interests of a rich and economically powerful minority. Although PASOK fought the 1989 election campaign on a ticket of major changes, the measures it introduced when in government were minimal and long overdue. It did not change, however, its rhetoric, which even then was one of national pride and aggressively anti-Western (ibid). PASOK is the party that has been governing Greece for almost the last two decades, with the exception of three years of government by the right wing (Nέa Dimokratίa) between 1989 and 1991. During this period the campaign for the restitution of the Parthenon (or 'Elgin') marbles has featured as a main issue in Melίna Merkuri's (a former Minister of Culture) political
endeavour as early as the first PASOK government in 1981. Along with the restitution of the Parthenon marbles, the return of the Olympic Games to Greece has been a declared aim.

The post-war Archaeological Service has been faced with a very difficult situation of how to preserve the Acropolis monuments. This has been worsened by air pollution and consequent acid rain, which destroys the sculptural details of the Acropolis’ artworks. Moreover, the increasing masses of tourists visiting the site wear out the floor of the Acropolis’ rock and its monuments. Since 1975 a more vivid and systematic interest is noted in relation to the Acropolis’ conservation and restoration, followed also by the organisation of international congresses. A multi-disciplinary committee was set up to investigate the problems created in the Acropolis’ monuments due to all the above-mentioned factors. The Committee for the Preservation of the Acropolis’ Monuments was officially established in 1977. The principal aims have been the containment of the continuing deterioration of the monuments, their further restoration as well as the correction of earlier mistakes (Búras 1994: 329-330).
CHAPTER III. GREECE CONDENSED: 
MATERIALISING NATIONAL IDENTITY

Stathis Gourgouris (1993; 1996) has discussed the nation as a social-imaginary institution (cf. Anderson 1991) the work of which is very similar to that of the dream-work as described by Freud. Criticising previous approaches to the concept of the nation as narration, he emphasises that 'attributing to the national imaginary the characteristics of an exclusively discursive formation is not fair to its complexity' (1993: 83). Alternatively, he argues, 'the emphasis must shift from nation-as-text to nation-as-dream, which is to say that those texts bearing the nation’s mark may ultimately be seen as descriptions of the nation’s dream-thoughts, thus figurai descriptions [...] of the nation’s dream-work' (ibid).

Jakobson (1975) has pointed out the metonymic and metaphorical character of mechanisms such as condensation and displacement, which, according to Freud, define dream-work. The way dream-thoughts are condensed in comparatively brief, laconic dream-contents is similar to the way metonymy 'involves a move from a part to a whole' (Tilley 1999: 5). On the other hand, the way dream-thoughts are displaced by 'distortions of the dream-wish, which exist in the unconscious' is similar to the way a metaphor transfers one term from one system or level of meaning to another (ibid: 4). If we take Gourgouris' comparison of nation-building to dream-work one step further, we could compare mechanisms such as condensation and displacement, with equivalent mechanisms that take place in nation-building. Metaphor and metonymy can be two quite useful devices in unravelling the ‘dream-thoughts’ behind the ‘dream-content’ of a nation.

Recently, it has been suggested (Tilley 1999) that the concept of metaphor can be a very useful tool in studying how the meeting of agency and material forms takes place in everyday life. More specifically, applying the concept of metaphor can prove fruitful in unravelling the various layers of meaning attributed to a piece of material culture. Metaphors, or rather tropes in general, highlight the multiplicity of the meanings of things in the way they are perceived, used, and translated in various cultural contexts and by different agents. Thus, things are not only polysemeic, but also
polytropic, as 'they assume various tropic capacities – as metaphors, metonyms, synecdoches, or ironies – as actors use the symbols' (Ohnuki-Tierney 1992: 129).

Ethnographic research in Greece has already pointed out the importance of metaphors as a means to illustrate and analyse the ways in which Greeks perceive and describe issues of national politics by transferring them to an everyday discourse (Herzfeld 1992, Sutton 1998). Here I will try to illuminate the condensed character of the nation/dream, through the analysis of a site of equally condensed meaning, namely the Acropolis. More specifically, my aim is to demonstrate the ways in which the idea of Greece is objectified in the material form of a specific archaeological site, namely the Acropolis in Athens. Through this material form the nation–state can evoke memories and communicate ideas, which can, in turn, be transformed or reproduced by the way the Acropolis is interpreted or used by particular actors. In doing so, I will use a (limited) set of tropes, which can provide a powerful key to understand the interaction and interrelation between the Acropolis and people who live in Athens.

III.A. THE ACROPOLIS AS HISTORY

History is an essential element in the cohesion of a nation. Lacking a national history means lacking the grounds for national recognition. Just and Sutton, among others, have noted that history in Greece is treated as a defining property of the Greek people (Sutton 1998: 135-136; Just 1995). During my fieldwork in Athens I also encountered various examples illustrating this pattern. In several conversations historicity and old age appeared as major qualities or virtues, the first one featuring as a kind of record that the Greek nation can display and the second testifying the richness of this record. In her composition, a student (6th GR) explains why ‘the past’ is so important for a nation’s life:

> As it is well-known, both the development and the survival of a culture depend on sources from which it draws its basic elements. The more solid, i.e. the more significant, these sources are, the more this culture is able to adapt to different situations and to manage not simply to survive, but also to dominate. This is the case for both European and modern Greek civilisation. Given that they both rest upon the ancient Greek civilisation, the best known and greatest civilisation of its times, they have a very stable basis, and thanks to it they survive and dominate.
In the student’s words, history becomes a kind of infrastructure supplying people with the necessary equipment for surviving or even dominating in the international arena. Moreover, it is a decisive, definite and unchangeable asset, which predetermines the present and the future of peoples. For another student of the same class, preserving the past of a people means preserving the main characteristics of a people, consequently preserving the people itself in the world. In other words, the specific distinction of a people within the world today can be found fossilised in the idea of the past:

> It goes without saying that each people’s antiquity is a necessary precondition for the preservation of their main characteristics as well as for their preservation within the social and political arenas of the world.

The past is thus ‘symbolic capital’ (Hamilakis and Yalouri 1996), a kind of possessed wealth. Perceiving the past as a resource also leads to the idea of the past as ‘property’ – a phenomenon that Sutton (1997; 1998) has discussed extensively in his ethnography in Kalimnos. As such, the past is attributed material qualities, such as size and physical presence.

Shanks and Tilley have discussed how ‘the time of an object becomes a property possessed, equivalent to mass and dimension’ (1992: 9). ‘The traces of the past’, they argue, ‘belong to a time in the distance, which we cannot see clearly. In this way time is conceived spatially, as distance. The object has been, it has happened. ‘This “perfected” past is opposed to the flow of the ongoing, incompletely, “imperfect” present’ (ibid). If the past is perceived spatially, it should not be surprising that it is sought in some physical, ‘objective’ evidence. The disciplines of history and archaeology provide raw material for this physical conceptualisation and recreation of the past. In fact, these two disciplines’ preoccupation with the production of ‘facts’ aiming at the revelation of the ‘historical truth’ is another example of how the past is perceived as complete and ‘perfected’ in space, as ‘cast in stone’ (Sutton 1998).

The Acropolis, the monument of the ‘national Greek past’ par excellence, is one of these forms of history’s objectification. It is not simply a historical monument; it is conceptualised as history itself. It is, as a teacher put it, ‘our tangible history, which awakens the feeling of patriotism within every Greek’. Several informants were fascinated by ‘how old’ the Acropolis is. The infatuation with oldness was not necessarily verbalised chronologically, but rather as a physical magnitude. Thus, I
came across proud statements, such as: 'We have the longest history in Europe' or '[The Acropolis hill] is the only hill that bears so much history' (emphasis added) (student of the 6th PR) or '[The Acropolis] is one of the most historical monuments' (emphasis added) (taxi-driver, Athens).

Sutton has noticed that 'history' for the people in the island of Kalimnos 'means the disruption of routine, an event that bursts on the scene' (1998: 135). This perception of history as an event is another form of history's objectification in the sense that it particularises and condenses the historical process in the form of a specific event. Setting off from Shanks' and Tilley's argument that time is conceived spatially, I would suggest that history is conceptualised as a disruption not only in time, (an event), but also in space (e.g. a monument). The Acropolis as a form of history's objectification is both a disruption in time, 'a golden moment [in the past]' (middle-aged housewife) and a disruption in space. It creates a distinctive form of space; it constitutes, to a large extent, the physical environment of Athens. It is a historical landmark, a gateway between time and space.

III.B. THE ACROPOLIS AS TERRITORY

It has been argued that the nationalist conceptualisation of time locating the members of a nation 'in the same temporal frame, one marked by progress' (Alonso 1994: 388), has transformed time into history (see also Anderson 1991: 24). Accordingly, the nationalist conceptualisation of 'people living within a single, shared spatial frame' has transformed space into territory (Alonso ibid: 382-3). Researchers of the nationalist phenomenon not only seem to agree that 'an idea of nation is inextricably tied to a sense of history', but they also stress the importance the concept of territory plays in nationalist discourses (e.g. Smith 1995). In other words, history and territory are tied up in nationalist imagining and are protagonists in the process of establishing a homogenous strong and shared feeling of national identity. In fact, the relationship between the two is so intimate that I believe that writing history is another way of drawing one's territory.

15 This is probably a reference to what she has learnt from school-books about 'the golden age of Pericles'.
It has been shown (Smith 1995: 91) that in 19th century nation-states the criterion of greatness was largely territorial. In Greece, a criterion of greatness was largely historical. Since the establishment of the Greek state, Greece's strong point, as opposed to other powerful Western nation-states, was not its territory (in fact its size was not enough to contemplate using it as a criterion for greatness). Although the Greek nationalist 'imagining' had territorial aspirations, (see for example the concept of the 'Great Idea'), its strong point was its history. Moreover, its spatial borders were under suspension and negotiable. By contrast, classical antiquity provided a period in the history of the land which accommodated the new state, highly and widely appreciated by the West, therefore serving as a more solid point of reference. Moreover, this history was not claimed by anyone else, and modern Greece, which bore the same name as the country that occupied the same land during the classical times, could be considered its legitimate 'owner' (only it would have to persuade others that it was the 'rightful' inheritor of that history). It should, therefore, not be surprising that history acquired characteristics similar to those of a territory: it is referred to as property (cf. Sutton 1998); it becomes measurable: the more you possess of it the better. It can even become the ground on which territorial claims can be made. The link between the two concepts of history and territory is so intimate that the first can serve as evidence for rights over the second: if history is linked with this territory, then this means that rights over this territory can be claimed as well (a claim also made within the framework of the Great Idea).

The Acropolis, as a symbol of history legitimises national territorial space, and it can therefore be easily transformed into a symbol of territory. The identification of the Acropolis with the Greek state's territory is evidenced in the cartoon of Figure 15. It appeared in the Greek press in 1996, after Turkey's attempt to occupy the Greek rock-island Ímia and it refers to this territorial occupation by comparing it with the site of the Acropolis being intruded by a Turkish Muezzin who preaches on the Parthenon (Ta Néa 8/8/96).

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16 cf. Skopetá (1988) and Tzióvas (1989) on the contrast between the small size of the 1827 (1834) nation-state vis-à-vis the territories under Ottoman rule comprising Greek-speaking populations and populations that had participated in the War of Independence.
Figure 15: A Turkish Muezzin, who preaches on the Parthenon. The person on the right says ‘oh, I can foresee things not going that well’. Cartoon by Stathis, *Ta Nέa* (8/8/96).

The transformation of time and space into history and territory respectively is also illustrated in a series of efforts after the establishment of the Greek nation-state to demarcate the site of the Acropolis, physically and symbolically in time and in space. First of all, the Acropolis’ site was declared an ‘archaeological site’. This definition, requiring for example the guarding of the site and the restriction of certain activities within the borders of the site, demarcates the latter and makes it an entity distinct from its surroundings. The ‘purification’ of the Acropolis from more recent buildings, undertaken by the Archaeological Society at Athens and completed in 1874, seems to go along with the homogeneity that the concept of a nation-state requires. It diminished the monument’s historicity, as it reduced its life-span to the classical period. The monument’s history was collapsed onto a moment of greatness, and it was converted into something remote and sacred. Since then, a series of actions have been aiming in the same direction. The height of the buildings in the wider area of the Acropolis is strictly regulated to ensure the visibility of the site (Marmarás 1991: 44). Also the terminology used when referring to the Acropolis e.g. the term ‘holy’ or ‘sacred’ rock which refers to the Acropolis hill, automatically places it on a higher
sphere than the affairs of everyday Greek life. So does the relation the Acropolis has 
with the surrounding inhabited area, or rather the distance that it is required to have 
from that which is traced much earlier than today. Hence, there were accusations and 
complaints provoked by the construction of Anafiotika, a small settlement that was 
built illegally on the slope of the Acropolis' hill by some workers from the Greek 
Island of Anáfi, in the beginning of the 1840s (for more details Filippídis 1984: 77). 
Similarly, in 1915 an Athenian newspaper criticised the construction of little houses 
in a street close to the Acropolis:

The fumes of the kitchens of the neighbourhood will be rising up to the 
Parthenon as an incense of the complete administrative indifference' 

These physical and symbolic boundaries place the Acropolis in a reductive and 
generic 'monumental time' as described by Herzfeld (1991) or 'epic time' as 
only its different dimension in space and time, but they also create wider boundaries 
differentiating Greece from the rest of the world. Consequently, those who are within 
the boundaries, or rather those who are represented by this 'national territory', are 
contrasted to all those who are outside them.

The nation-state is a historical and cultural construct, which, however, tries to 
naturalise itself through ‘myths’ (Barthes 1974), ‘systems of knowledge/power’ and 
‘regimes of truth’ (Foucault 1980), or simply by making itself part of people’s 
‘habitus’ (Bourdieu 1977). Another way of naturalising a nation-state order is through 
associating it with images borrowed from nature itself, such as the earth and the soil, 
natural products of the homeland, or national landscapes (for specific examples see 
Alonso 1994: 383). The metonymic experiencing of the Greek national territory in the 
form of the Acropolis’ earth and soil can be illustrated in the following two examples:

Mr. Sofoklíš used to be an officer who fought in the North of Egypt during the WWII. 
A few years ago he visited the grave of his friend, in a cemetery near the battlefield. 
Mr. Sofoklíš brought with him some soil from the Acropolis and spread it over the 
grave of his friend. As his friend never managed to come back home, Mr. Sofoklíš 
brought ‘the homeland’ to his friend. More than that, through this act he transformed
the foreign land where his dead friend lay into Greek soil which would receive the
dead body of its child and would let it lie in peace.

In a different situation, in the summer of 1997 a Greek mission to Cyprus called
Kímon ‘97 took place, organised by the prefecture of Athens and supported by the
municipality of Athens, various Universities and other institutions. The name of the
mission was commemorative of the mission of Kímon, the Athenian leader of the 5th
century BC, who marched out against the Persians when the latter occupied the island
of Cyprus. The purpose of the ’97 mission was to deliver to Cyprus the Athenian
flame, which burns up on the Acropolis, as well as some soil from Pnyka, the hill just
opposite the Acropolis linked with classical Athenian Democracy. Both the flame and
the soil would be deposited on the graves of two Greek-Cypriot protesters killed by
Turks or Turks-Cypriots during a protest in the Turkish zone of Nicosia, on the
anniversary of the Turkish invasion in Cyprus (see Kathimerini 21/8/97).

Given that Cyprus is an island contested by Greeks and Turks and given that the two
Greek-Cypriot protesters were killed while demonstrating their anti-Turkish feelings,
the symbolic act of delivering Greek earth and flame to the island was highly
political, also suggesting the claim for the ‘Greekness’ of Cyprus. What is interesting
in both cases, however, is that the Greek soil and flame came from the site of the
Acropolis.

Most of the students I talked to described the Acropolis as ‘their monument’, a
monument that shows things about ‘them’ as a nation, as a spirit. As one of them said,
the Acropolis is a ‘symbol and a creation of the Greek spirit, it is the symbol of the
Greek civilisation, it is the sign of Greece’ (6th GR). In other words, they made no
distinction between modern Greece and ancient Greece, modern Greek and ancient
Greek spirit, Greek and ancient Greek civilisation.

A student of the 5th GR school wrote:

   Behind the rock of the Acropolis lies the admirable course of a nation,
   which achieved great things in everything it undertook. The Acropolis is
   identified with Greece itself; it is the main and greatest national treasure of
   our country. The revolution of 1821, the struggles that followed it until our
   country acquired its boundaries of today, the war of 1940, [all these] took
   place for the defense of our boundaries, of our religion, of democracy, and
   of national and cultural heritage. The Acropolis’ national importance is
underlined by the blue and white flag which, from the highest point of the Greek capital, keeps our national conscience awake.

In the words of the student, the Acropolis becomes the site where past and present, ancient classical and modern Greece meet. It is not just the symbol of Athens, or even of ancient Greece. It actually transcends time, being a symbol of the Greek nation, traceable far back in history. It becomes the substantiation of the homeland, the objectification of the essence of the nation-state.

III.C. THE ACROPOLIS AS GREEK FLAG

The Acropolis' dominant position on a hill in the middle of Athens gives it a communicative power inscribed on its material form. Foucault has connected visibility, or 'the gaze' with the operation of power and he has rejected the 'innocence' or 'naturalness' of 'being seen' (Rajchman 1988). One could argue that the Acropolis' dominant position is 'innocent', as it was built a long time before the modern Greek state was established. As we saw earlier, however, this position has not only been maintained, but there have been a series of efforts to enhance it since
the beginning of the building of the new Greek capital. Here I would like to argue that the Acropolis performs a function similar to a national flag. In fact, the prominent position that it occupies reinforces its conceptualisation as such. The visualisation of the Parthenon is often made with the Greek flag waving before it – the Greek flag does actually wave on the Acropolis. It is raised and lowered every sunrise and sunset respectively by the Greek national guards (évzoni) (Figure 16). For a student of a primary school, whose classroom has a direct view to the Acropolis, just saying the word ‘Acropolis’ brings the image of ‘the half-ruined Parthenon with the blue and white flag waving in front of it to her mind. Another student associated the restitution of the Parthenon marbles with the waving of the Greek flag on the Acropolis, thus manifesting to whom the contested heritage belongs:

The Parthenon marbles must come back, because they are part of our civilisation. No matter what, the Acropolis will always belong to Greece and the Greek flag will always wave in front of the Parthenon (6th PR).

In 1834, one day after the arrival of the first Bavarians in the newly established Greek state ‘an old captain from Hios saw from Pireus, where he had anchored his ship, that there was no Greek flag waving on the Acropolis’ hill. He came to the Acropolis and he asked [the Bavarians] to raise the flag in the Parthenon. The Bavarians accepted and, in a while, the captain’s son with some Athenians climbed up the hill and raised
the flag’ (cited in Filippidis 1994). Let us not forget that the Acropolis used to be called ‘the fortress’ (*to kástro*) of the city of Athens and fortresses used to be the symbols of their cities. Moreover, the Acropolis was actually used as a fortress in the 19th century during the last years of the War of Independence until it was handed over by the Turks to the Bavarians in 1833 (Figure 17). As the Acropolis was already the symbol of city of Athens, it was an easy transition to become the symbol of the Greek nation-state, especially once Athens became the capital of Greece.

On May 31st 1941 two young men removed the German flag with the swastika from the Acropolis’ hill. As one of them remembers today (*Éthnos* 24/3/97):

We wanted to throw it down, to tear it apart and, thus, to wash out the dirt from the Sacred Rock.

This event enjoyed wide publicity. The two young men have repeatedly been honoured for their act, which is still commemorated today as the beginning of the resistance against the German occupation in Greece (Figure 18) and has inspired artists both within and outside Greece (Petrákos 1994: 111) (Figure 19).

![Figure 18: Article in the newspaper *Éthnos* (24/3/97) dedicated to the act of Glezos and Sántas. The title quotes their words ‘We took the flag down with our teeth’.](image)

17 The Acropolis used to be called ‘*to kástro*’ (the fortress) during the Frankish and Ottoman occupation of the Acropolis, but as I already mentioned it did function as a fortress as early as the Neolithic period.
A Greek archaeologist, discussing that event, said to me:

Why [do you think that] Glézos [this is the name of one of the two men] did not remove the flag from the Old Royal Palace or from the Parliament? In Paris he would have removed it from the Étoile. Here, it was the flag on the Acropolis that hurt the Greek [he actually used the term Romiós]. This is what disturbed him. I remember my father, [although he was] a person having received German education, referring to the German flag as ‘the stain’. But it was the stain on the Acropolis [that disturbed him]. A ‘stain’ existed also opposite [of where he lived], in the National Museum. He had it in front of him, but he was not disturbed; it was the other one that disturbed him. This is how things are. [The Acropolis] is a point of reference.

According to these words the Acropolis is identified as the focal point of the nation. It becomes a field of resistance against the foreign power. It actually becomes the Greek nation’s flag, which cannot possibly co-exist with the Nazi one. The idea of Greece is
embodied in the site of the Acropolis. This is why it is the flag on this particular place that is considered 'polluting', an intrusion to Greek territory, and a disgrace for Greece.

Other acts of patriotism are also linked with the Acropolis during the period of the Nazi occupation. There is a story which may be real or legendary (Petrákos 1994: 110), about a young Greek soldier guarding the flag on the Acropolis. When the Nazis occupied Athens and headed towards the Acropolis in order to remove the Greek flag, the Greek soldier wrapped himself in it and jumped from the Acropolis. The soldier's suicidal sacrifice is the symbolic opposite to Glézos' and Sántas' act. The Greek flag goes down with the soldier in an act of despair in the face of the German invasion.

The site of the Acropolis is also considered the most appropriate locus for the Greek nation-state to manifest and to celebrate itself every year, when the departure of the last German troops from Greece is commemorated. In this celebration the official Greek flag is carried around in a parade (Figure 20). A newspaper (Kathimerini 13/10/95), reporting on this event, wrote: 'The sacred rock was flooded in blue and white [the Greek flag's colours]...The Parthenon was watching [the celebrations] and was rejoicing'.

There have been a series of events that took place on the Acropolis, which associate it with the Greek flag. The flag, originally raised on the site when the Greek nation-state was established, served as its representation. However, its removal and its re-establishment, its association with acts of resistance and its celebration every year, create multiple layers of meaning and reproduce it in people's consciousness.
Billig (1995) has examined how national identity is brought home to the people on an everyday basis through routine symbols or habits of language that often operate beyond the level of conscious awareness. Referring to national flags, he argues that they can be either ‘waved/flagged/saluted’ or ‘unwaved/unflagged/unsaluted’. By that, he means that there are cases where a national flag can hang unnoticed outside a building, it can be stitched on officers’ uniforms or stuck on commercial products to indicate their place of production. All these signs however, pass mindlessly through the everyday routine; they are ‘flagging’ national identity ‘unflaggingly’ as they form part of people’s ‘habitus’. On the other hand there are also flags which are consciously waved and displayed. According to Billig, the ‘waved’ flags call attention to themselves, like for example when a nation seeks its independence or when it feels challenged. Billig argues that symbols of nationhood start operating as ‘unwaved’ when a nation-state becomes established in its sovereignty, although there are cases, such as commemoration days, when the flags would be waved as well.

One can see Billig’s argument very well illustrated in the case of the Acropolis. The earlier quoted archaeologist, referring to the history of the Acropolis said that the latter has always been a point of reference. I quote the dialogue that followed:

Yalouri: Do you believe that the Acropolis is still a point of reference today?

Archaeologist: Oh, yes! You should have lived during the [Nazi] occupation in order to realise that.

Yalouri: But I am asking about today.

Archaeologist: The points of reference are always points of reference in times of difficulty. They are never points of reference in easy moments. You don’t need points of reference in easy moments.

The Acropolis is one of those signs, which are so familiar that they often pass unnoticed in the everyday life of the Athenians as unwaved flags of Greek national identity. It can, however, become a waved flag when the situation requires it. For the archaeologist, the Acropolis becomes a ‘flagged flag’, only when Greek nationhood is
challenged. It is then that it is required to leave ‘the enhabited national homeland’ (Billig 1995: 43) and to become a potent symbol flagging the Greek nationhood.

III.D. THE ACROPOLIS AS PHYSICAL BODY

Once the nation-state is seen as a ‘natural’ entity with clearly marked boundaries, it is not far from being perceived as a living creature, bounded and self-contained, characterised and identified by a distinct set of attributes (see also Alonso 1994: 384). It has been argued that the human body as a ‘natural symbol’ (Douglas 1970) serves as a means to perceive social relations and processes, whilst at the same time it reflects and represents the culture in which it was developed, and within which it moves and acts. Here I would like to demonstrate how the human body provides an analogy of the Greek nation-state as materialised in the form of the Acropolis.

The Romantic concept of nationalism viewed the nation as a living organism (Kiriakidu-Néstoros 1978: 37-38) which develops through time. Fascist discourses have made extensive use of this metaphor. For example, the colonels’ dictatorship aspired to the healing of ‘the ill body of the Greek nation’ (to sóma pu nosei) and for that reason they aimed at ‘wrapping it in plaster of Paris’ (to éthnos pu bénei sto ýípsoi). The opponents of the dictatorship, in their turn, adopted the same terminology to resist the authoritarian regime. For them the Greek nation was indeed ill, but because of the junta – and the plaster of Paris in which the nation found itself was not therapeutic material but the rigid mould of the junta’s despotism.

The conception of the nation-state as a living creature is not new. Handler (1984; 1988) for example has shown how the Québécois nation is personified in nationalist rhetoric. Denying a nation its very specificity is, in the words of the head of the Parti Québécois, like mutilating this nation, obliging it to live ‘without an arm or a leg – or perhaps a heart’ leading it thus, ‘as in cases of pernicious anemia’, to a slow death.

It is interesting that the Acropolis often appears as a body, which is violated and mutilated not only by time and air pollution, but also by the looting of Lord Elgin. In

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18 By the term ‘enhabited’ Billig alludes to Bourdieu’s ‘habitus’. To quote his words: ‘Thoughts, reactions and symbols become turned into routine habits and, thus, they become enhabited’. (ibid: 42) (emphasis in the original).
such discussions, the removal of the sculptures from the Parthenon by Elgin often represents Western arrogance and imperialism. A lady, member of the ‘Society of the Athenians’, wrote a poem under the title ‘The Parthenon’ (*Ta Athinaiká* 92: 47):

They took the Caryatids away from you.
They did not ask you,
whether you felt pain.
They did not ask you,
whether you long for them,
day and night.
You cry silently
over your wounds.
Enemies and friends,
opened them.
They set your heart on fire.
Their black stain
has not totally disappeared

The terminology used in the discussions about preservation/restoration works undertaken on the site of the Acropolis often interprets the Acropolis as a body ‘in the operating theatre, heavily ill’ (*Ependitis* 8-9/3/97), and the architects and conservators as ‘curing it’ (e.g. *Eleftherotípta* 15/10/96). For example, in an interview with a conservator of the Acropolis’ monuments a journalist spoke of conservation works as open-heart surgery. To use his words ‘the most important Greek monument, point of reference for all peoples on earth is ill’. The conservator adopted a similar terminology, while explaining how she and her co-workers use surgical instruments and peroxide, exactly as one would on a wound. ‘These marbles’, she said, ‘are tired from wear, they have grown old and they are full of wounds’.

The ‘illness’ and ‘suffering’ of the Acropolis’ body are often associated with a more general crisis of the Greek state. For example, the Greek architect Dimitris Filippidis comments on the destruction of the Parthenon marbles because of the pollution and their calcination:¹⁹

We are talking about the symbol of Hellenism par excellence, identified with Greek society. The suffering of Greek society could be related, by some imagination, to the suffering of the paramount monument. Couldn’t the contemporary ‘calcination’ of the monument be perfectly compared to

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¹⁹ Filippidis, professor of architecture at the Technical University of Athens, is an important figure in the area of modern Greek architecture. He is interested not simply in the historical or morphological features of architecture, but also in the social/ideological parameters that created them.
the general crisis we go through? Can't the dead ends that we reach [as a nation and/or state] be understood with the dead ends that our national monument reaches? (Andr 1990 453: 44).

Filippídis thus compares the 'suffering' of the Acropolis' body with that of the Greek national body. As we will see in the following section, the antiquities in general, and the Acropolis in particular, are often presented as metaphors of the Greek national body.

III.E. THE ACROPOLIS AS NATIONAL BODY

Miliádis, a prestigious Greek archaeologist and former head of the Acropolis eforía (1941-1960), wrote in the middle of this century (EDAE 5, 1989):

Our land, the blessed land of the marble gods, is studded with antiquities […] Temples, the columns of which appear in the blue background of the sky and of the sea; theatres, the rich echo of which convey the slightest whisper; castles which seem to be built by superhuman powers. And there are also whole marbled cities, full of mystery and memories from old years that founded the most glowing civilisation of Europe and of the whole world…

[…) Every spring and autumn – the seasons when the excavations take place – mother Greek land brings into light more and more of her marble, bronze, and terracotta children. Our antiquities are the most precious, rare, and invaluable products of the Greek land.

[…) It looks like a fairy tale, a fisherman throwing his nets into the sea and bringing out a marble god. A European wise man said years ago that archaeology is at home in Greece. It is true that our lives have been linked to the antiquities on this divine land, studded with miracles. It is one of the most universal characteristics of our country. It is one of our most fair prides and one of our more authentic epithets. It is our wealth, which we will bequeath together with our country to our children.

What we have here is a hymn to the body of the Greek motherland, bearing invaluable children. The Greek earth is blessed because it is fertile, its fertility lying in its richness in antiquities. Antiquities are depicted as natural products of the Greek land, and Greece as the mother of these 'divine' children is raised to a divine level too. Antiquities are considered to be title and 'wealth', i.e. a cultural investment, which Greeks inherit from their mother Greece, one generation after the other.
The above-cited text is a good example of how nature and culture fuse in the conceptualisation of antiquities in general. Beyond that, however, it suggests that the body of the Greek land gives birth to both people and antiquities. In other words, they both constitute a wider Greek national family, the Greek national body.

In the last few years there has been a plea in the anthropological literature to examine nationalism as an ideological or cultural system similar to kinship. Research has taken place in Greece which illuminates the logic of nationalism that treats the nation as a family (Herzfeld 1992; Sutton 1997, 1998). Kinship, it has been argued, provides the means to study nationalism from the ‘bottom-up’ and to elucidate the ‘nationalist imagining’ not simply as a construction of the nation-state, but also as a practice which can either reproduce or challenge the nation-state (ibid). I would argue, that the Acropolis, apart from being ‘a national flag’ representing Greek nationhood, also stands as part of the Greek national body representing the blood ties of the wider Greek family.

In this respect, a part of the discussion I had at the 6th PR school with a ten-year-old student is also revealing. Speaking about the Acropolis, she said that ‘old things provoke awe in us’. Starting from that statement, the following dialogue emerged:

*Yalouri*: Why do you say that old things provoke awe in us? We have an old thing at home and we throw it away because it has become old.

*Maria*: It is not the same, because things do not have the same value. For example, you have an old shoe and you throw it away, but you never throw away the photo of your great grandfather or a person that you love very much.

With these words, the student compares her feelings towards antiquities with her emotional attachment to her family. The suggestion is that the feelings one has towards one’s personal past are comparable with and equivalent to those towards the national past. In fact, the national past is perceived in personal terms. The Acropolis is not simply an old thing, which has deteriorated physically and in meaning. On the contrary, its physical deterioration is a product of its historicity, which further increases its – what Ricoeur has termed – ‘surplus of meaning’, the accumulation of

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20 The authoritarian regimes of the 20th century made extensive use of the analogy between nation and family as part of the mystification of their oppressive nature. For example, Metaxás and Stalin identified themselves as the fathers of their nations (Mahéra 1987: 181-196).
meanings that transcend any literary signification (Ricoeur 1976). It has become a ‘biographical object’ (Kopytoff 1986; Hoskins 1998).

In 1992, the Greek government decided to send twenty-one antiquities of the 5th century BC for display at the National Gallery of Art in Washington and the Metropolitan Museum of New York. The exhibition was titled ‘The Greek Miracle. Classical sculpture from the Dawn of Democracy’. This decision aroused strong reactions in Greece. The poster of Figure 21 advertised the opposition of the ‘Panhellenic Cultural Movement’, a leftist society. The head of a well-known classical statue appears with a deep crack, splitting it in two. The heading says: ‘No to the uprooting. Do not let our works of art leave Greece’. The crack on the head of the statue implies the dismemberment, the disintegration, which would follow the ‘expatriation’ of the antiquities. The Archaeological Society at Athens (see chapter I) summoned a general meeting to discuss its position towards the governmental decision. In the meeting, the members’ views were divided. The government’s supporters based their argument on the grounds that it highlights the ‘global’ character of the Greek antiquities and their role as ‘ambassadors of Greece abroad’. The opposition’s opinion was grounded on ‘the national meaning’ of the antiquities, which did not allow their ‘expatriation’, or indeed any action that could put them in the slightest danger.

Figure 21: Panhellenic Cultural Movement poster opposing the governmental decision to send Greek antiquities abroad for display (source: Karahristos 1984).
In discussions about the restitution of the Parthenon marbles, statements such as 'The Parthenon marbles should come back; it is as if they are stealing a part of your body' are frequent. As a ten-year-old student puts it (6th PR):

Every single piece of the Acropolis is a part of Greece. On these pieces the Greek language, history and identity are established. These are the sources where the knowledge about the past is drawn from, where the claims for Greekness are grounded, and where the glory of the ancient inhabitants of Greece is evidenced. With this evidence every Greek will be asked to defend the Greekness of contested areas. However, this is impossible when the cultural heritage is dispersed. Therefore, the restitution of the Elgin marbles is a national demand.

According to the above, every single piece of the Acropolis not simply conveys, but actually is Greece. When these pieces are dispersed in foreign museums all over the world, Greece cannot survive as a totality. This is also why some students consider the integrity of the Acropolis so crucial.

The language used in discussions about the Parthenon marbles' restitution has many similarities with the one used when referring to expatriated members of a Greek family. For example, the Caryatid of the British Museum is often presented as crying and missing her sisters 'wanting to go back home' (an old Athenian legend which I heard reproduced several times). Students of the 6th PR school told me: '[The Parthenon marbles] must come back to their mother, to the country that gave birth to them and they should come back from the foreign lands', or 'they must come back to their brothers and sisters who are waiting for them and are lamenting for their loss' etc. For them, antiquities are able to experience the bitterness of expatriation exactly like all those Greeks who had to emigrate to Germany, the USA, Australia etc.

Every time I visited the Parthenon marbles' room at the British museum I met Greeks who had felt the need to visit their 'expatriated' heritage, as a Greek tourist called it. Most of them were commenting on the act of Elgin having 'stolen' the marbles and some were becoming quite sentimental as well as aggressive against Elgin and the British nation in general. One of them described her experience after her visit: 'I felt as though I would cry – they looked imprisoned in that room'. Many referred to the Greek antiquities of the British Museum as if they were living members of an extended Greek family.
The conceptualisation of the Acropolis in relation to expatriated Greeks is also made by advertisements: a Greek insurance company (Figure 22) advertises its new offices in Cologne, and addresses the Greeks of Germany. The heading says ‘Guten Morgen to our compatriots in Germany’. In the accompanying photo the Parthenon appears facing the Dome, the cathedral of Cologne. The implication is that through the new branch of the company in Cologne, Greece comes closer to its children, the Greeks of the diaspora in Germany. And the symbol chosen to incarnate Greece is the Acropolis.

![Figure 22: Newspaper advertisement of a Greek bank’s new branch in Cologne, Germany.](image)

The Greek diaspora or, as it is known in Greece, ‘Emigrant Hellenism’, is often considered by Greeks in mainland Greece as the remaining witness of so-called ‘ecumenical Hellenism’. The ‘ecumenical’ character of Hellenism is the Greek interpretation of the phenomenon of global Hellenism. Ecumenical Hellenism refers to the whole of the Greek nation, comprising Greeks in Greece as well as Greeks outside the borders of Greece. It also refers to how the Greeks perceive the cultural influence Hellenism had in ancient times, under the empire of Alexander the Great, the Romans, and the Byzantine Empire. Moreover, it refers to the appeal classical Hellenism has had since the Renaissance to a world expanding out of the Greek state’s borders. Throughout the history of the Greek state, Greeks have ascribed great
importance to the role of the communities of the Greek diaspora. For example, Metaxas’ regime wanted to organise the Greeks of the diaspora under the strict control of the Greek state, so that they also contribute to the accomplishment of the ‘mutual national destination’ (Mahéra 1987: 62-63). More recently, actions have been taken by the Greek government in order to found a Council of ‘Emigrant Hellenism’. In 1996, Hríostos Yiannarás criticised this governmental action in the following words:21

The satisfaction deriving from the founding of the Council of Emigrant Hellenism was based on the logic of a common quest: that the dispersed powers of the Greek emigrants should be more efficiently organised; that the state of Greece should take advantage of the dynamism of the diaspora both on the level of international relationships as well as in specific problems of foreign affairs […]. This artificial state – that the Bavarians created for us and that we keep intact in its borrowed structure - has not succeeded in anything. The request, however, was common: to subordinate even the last strong support of the Greek ecumenism to the state failure. To organise the extraordinary dynamism of the Greek diaspora according to the model of the failed and miserable state provincialism… The ecumenical Greek diaspora does not need organisation based on imitations of the state provincialism, councils and parliaments of emigrants (Kathimerini 30/6/96).

Thus, in the eyes of some Greeks living within the borders of the Greek state, the Greek state of today represents a shrunken Hellenism often associated with failure and inefficiency. This Hellenism constrained-by-borders is occasionally juxtaposed to the simmering, smouldering power and potential of ecumenical Hellenism as embodied by the Greek diaspora.

The Greek antiquities, dispersed in museums of the West, are often considered by Greeks to play a role similar to that of the Greek diaspora, namely to be the representatives of Greece abroad, or as it is often said, the ‘ambassadors’ of Greece abroad. In discussions about the restitution of the Parthenon marbles, along with those arguing in favour of the repatriation of the Parthenon marbles there are also some who express the opinion that the marbles, being abroad, can transmit messages about the grandeur of the Greek civilisation. They believe that their physical dispersion all over the world might, after all, work to Greece’s advantage.

21 Hríostos Yiannarás is a Greek intellectual, representative of the so-called ‘Neo-orthodox’ movement (Neoorthoxía) in Greece. Neoorthodoxía projects Orthodox Christianity as a feature as important as classical antiquity in the shaping of Greek identity.
Apparently, this metaphor of the dispersed antiquities as the dispersed Greek national body is one that links the ‘Emigrant Hellenism’ with its metropolis. In Figure 23 the Greek community is parading on the 5th Avenue in New York holding a model of the Parthenon on a March 25th, the day of the declaration of the Greek War of Independence. Figure 23 also shows the Greek community of a village in the south of Russia at the foot of the Caucasus dancing under a framed painting of the Parthenon.

In a similar spirit the ‘Union of Hellenic (Greek) Students Societies in the UK’, representing approximately 22,000 Greek and Greek-Cypriot students, have occasionally taken the initiative to advocate Greek rights over the restitution of the Parthenon marbles in Britain. For example they assigned the 5th of December 1997 as ‘Parthenon day’. The activities that were organised for that day included a mass e-mailing, through the Union’s ‘Parthenon-day web-site’, to the British government, the Labour Party, the British Museum and the British Embassy in Athens asking for renegotiation over the issue of the marbles. In addition, they organised a demonstration outside the British Museum with a big banner demanding the return of the Parthenon marbles. The demonstration was followed by a debate about the restitution of the Parthenon Marbles, in which Stelios Paphthemelis, a former Greek minister, and British journalists participated (Symposium 1998; cf. Hamilakis 1999).
Apart from collective manifestations of Greek identity enacted by the Greeks of the diaspora, more personal ones occur too. The following letter, sent by a Greek lady living in East Berlin to the magazine *Andi* (1990 40: 65), asks the Greek state to take further steps towards the return of the Greek antiquities in the Pergamon museum:

‘Dear Andi,

I am established in East Berlin and I often visit the Pergamon Museum. When I face the imprisoned masterpieces of the ancient Greek city of Pergamon, I feel – together with the dazzling awe that they provoke in me – at the same time a pain in the chest. In a continuously rainy and depressing East Berlin, in that ungraceful huge museum without a single window, I feel that those figures have a complaint, it is as if the Ionian smile has been lost from their face. In a way I feel as if I am imprisoned in that gray building. I must apologise for the emotion I demonstrate for these statues. The truth is that I love them very much […]’

Figure 24: The statue of goddess Athena, sent by the mayor of Athens, Dimitris Avramópulos, to the Greeks of Astoria, New York, NY. The statue was placed in Athens Square Park. The inscription on the base of the statue says: ‘A gift from the people of Athens, Capital of Greece, to the people of the city of New York’ (photo by A. H. Yalouri).

Classical antiquities are not only used by the Greek diaspora to celebrate their national identity. The mother-country uses them as well, to demonstrate her affection for her dispersed children. In 1998, on the occasion of the commemmoration of the beginning of the Greek War of Independence, the mayor of Athens sent a statue of the
ancient Greek goddess Athena, two and a half metres high, to the Greeks of New York to celebrate (Figure 24). That statue was sent to decorate the square of Astoria, the Greek neighbourhood of New York (Eleftherotipia 15/3/98).

III.F. CONCLUSIONS

The Acropolis is an example showing, in the most explicit manner, the extent to which material culture, being visible, tangible and durable, can be more expressive than language. The Acropolis contains multiple, lengthy arguments without needing any narrative. The French historian Pierre Norra (1998) introduced the idea of ‘lieux de mémoire’ in his wish to study national feeling not in the traditional thematic or chronological manner, but by analysing the places where the French collective heritage is ‘crystallised’. Thus, lieux de mémoire are poly-referential entities drawing on a multiplicity of cultural myths that can be appropriated for different ideological or political purposes. The Acropolis is such a ‘lieu de mémoire’, invested with what Paul Ricoeur has called ‘surplus of meaning’ (1976) or ‘reservoir of meanings’ (Connerton 1989: 56-7) which is available for various uses and interpretations.

In the beginning of this chapter I referred to Gourgouris’ comparison of the nation to a dream. The Acropolis can be seen as a metaphor or metonymy, ‘condensing’ or ‘displacing’ Greek nationalism during the Greek national dream-work. The Acropolis is ‘dense with cultural meaning and value’ (Weiner 1994). It is this density and condensation that make it extremely powerful in its claims and in its negotiations. If dreams are expressions of a person’s psyche and analysing the former’s mechanisms is a way to explore the latter, analysing the Acropolis as a product of the Greek nation’s dream-work can help us trace the Greek national ‘psyche’. Alonso (1994: 382, 386) has suggested that if we are to explain how an ‘imagined community’ becomes second nature and lived experience, we should look at nationalism as a ‘structure of feeling’ (Williams 1977: 132-135), a concept that Williams uses to describe ‘meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt’ (ibid: 132). In unravelling these ‘structures of feelings the means of metaphors and tropes in general can prove illuminating. The Acropolis is a materialised and embodied ‘structure of feeling’, which brings us back to where we started from: the interrelation between structure and agent, things and persons. The Acropolis, featuring on the walls of the
houses or in the restaurant names of the American Greeks in Alamo, Texas or in Melbourne, serves as the meeting point of Hellenisms. The Acropolis as Greek earth, homeland, flag, territory, history or body becomes the ultimate symbol of Greek identity and of national identification. It unifies past and present, classical and ethnic Hellenisms by providing an ‘authentic’, durable, and tangible identity.
CHAPTER IV. CONTESTATIONS OF GREEK IDENTITY BETWEEN THE LOCAL AND THE GLOBAL

IV.A. INTRODUCTION

On a political level I believe that Europe looks at us like a third world country in its periphery. It thinks that we are a small dependent country, a naughty child, a black sheep, which always wants to profit without offering anything. This is the general image. On a cultural level, it depends on whom we are talking about. There are certain European countries with which Greece has a tradition of cultural and social relations and which see us with more understanding, e.g. France, maybe Italy, Spain. There are others, like the British, who see us like Arabs wearing trousers. There are others with classical education who see us in a romantic way and see our relationship with our ancestors in a more direct way. I don’t believe, however, that this is so much the case nowadays as it used to be, say, in the 60s and 70s. Classical studies were more popular in those times, they were also supported by their countries, and they used to have another glamour. Now there are different tendencies, multiculturalism. For example, Mexicans say ‘why should we consider the classical Greek civilisation as a point of reference, when it was also worshipped by Hitler? Now there are historians who do not even refer to us when they say ‘Europe’. By ‘Europe’ they mean mainly the central European countries, i.e. France, Germany, and Italy’. (Sifis, Cretan left wing activist)

Sifis’ words are a good introduction to the way the Greeks perceive their relationship with Europe and the rest of the world. He links Greece’s political position in Europe with its cultural position, and he discusses its cultural profile as one of ‘a third world country in Europe’s periphery’. Although he considers the countries which belong to the Mediterranean cultural zone (France, Italy, and Spain) more understanding towards Greece, he associates the inferior position of Greece with the decrease of the value of classical antiquity in the West.

Greece joined the European Union in 1979. Although Greece has subsequently been a full member of the EU since 1981, in Greek people’s minds it plays a secondary role in decision-making, because the voting rights in most EU institutions are proportional to each country’s number of citizens. Until very recently, its economic situation was weak, due to a large budget deficit. The Greek economy is no longer considered weak. The situation has changed dramatically during recent years and Greece will

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soon join the European Monetary Union. These developments, however, are too recent to change the defensive attitudes which a majority of modern Greeks have in relation to international politics. Such attitudes should be seen also in connection with the general feeling in Greece that, ever since the establishment of the Greek state, foreign powers, especially Britain and the USA, have been interfering with – if not controlling – political developments in the area. Major destructive events in Greek history, such as the Asia Minor Catastrophe (1922), the Greek Civil War (1944-1949), the Colonels’ Junta (1967-1974), as well as more recent and less disastrous events, such as the Greek-Turkish dispute over the rock-island Ímía (1996) (see p. 60) are widely considered as episodes in which foreign powers played a role detrimental to Greece. Moreover, on the cultural level the influence of multi-culturalism has seriously undermined classicism as a dominant ideology, and the use of classical antiquity for the ideological justification of domination and suppression (cf. Bernal 1987) has diminished its value. Practical reasons, like the decline of classical studies, due to the prioritising of research to be more financially profitable and practical (cf. Sínchrona Thémata 64 (1997)) have had the same effect. Finally, since the 1990s, the wider area of the Balkans has been experiencing wars and turmoil from which new nations have been born and older ones (former Yugoslavia) been fragmented. During this period Greece has not just been an observer of these socio-political developments, but it has been actively involved on various levels: it has been asked and has tried to play the role of a referee, for example in the conflict between the Serbs and the Croats; it has been accused by the Former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia (FYROM) of having expansionist intentions, while Greece itself feels threatened; it has had its boundaries questioned by Turkey. All these developments do not simply remain on a theoretical level, but are actually experienced by Greeks in their everyday life: a large number of refugees, e.g. from Albania, have fled to Greece; the media broadcast, interpret, or even invent scenarios for upcoming wars; both political and ecclesiastical authorities have officially acknowledged how crucial and unpredictable the situation is, and have adopted a more or less heroic discourse in their agendas. All these parameters have been adding to a feeling of insecurity that should be taken into account in the following discussion concerning the negotiation of Greek identity on an international level.
IV.B. BUILDING AN IMAGE – THE ‘MISSION’ OF ANTIQUITIES ABROAD

My intention here is to discuss how classical antiquities become active agents, involved in the Greek efforts to establish an honourable profile and to become a dynamic presence in a changing world. For this purpose I will use a case study – a discussion that took place among the members of the Archaeological Society at Athens (hereafter ASA) regarding the 1992 governmental decision to send some antiquities of the 5th century BC – including sculptures from the Acropolis – to be exhibited in the USA (the discussion’s proceedings were published in a special edition of the ASA newsletter – *O Mendor* 20, 1992). As I mentioned in the previous chapter, those who supported the government’s decision highlighted the global character of Greek antiquities and their role as ‘ambassadors’ of Greece abroad. Those against focused on the national meaning of the antiquities which did not allow their ‘expatriation’, or indeed any action that could expose them to the slightest danger. ‘The antiquities’, it was said, ‘are not just works of secular art, but national heirlooms’ (ibid: 29). Geórgios Dontás, a classical archaeologist and ex-director of antiquities in Athens, was in favour of sending the antiquities abroad:

[...] When new, huge cultural entities are formed, among them the entity of the ‘Western world’, Greece not only participates, but claims by right the position of the respectful wet-nurse, and when the states of all the world are linked together with dense networks of cultural decisions, including periodic exhibitions, is it logical for Greece to refuse deliveries of antiquities, especially when such an attitude would provoke the cessation of the reciprocal arrival of foreign works of art to our country and the cultural marginalisation of the country? I believe that this action would also be extremely dangerous politically, because other neighbouring peoples would gladly take advantage of the Greek absence by undertaking the presentation of the Greek cultural heritage abroad and by completely distorting the historical truth, bearing disastrous results for our country. [...] The ‘offensive’ presence of our ancient [ancestors] in a foreign country from which we expect certain benefits has definitely a much bigger impact to the people of this country than if they viewed the same ancient [ancestors] in our museums under the well-known, passive guided tours of people in herds. (ibid: 37-39)

According to Dontás, Greece being ‘the respectful wet-nurse’ of the Western world claims the position it deserves within the transformations that take place worldwide. Together with the ‘exportation’ of antiquities abroad, Greece re-exports at the same
time its title as 'the cradle of the Western world'. In this way, it reminds the world that there is a 'legitimate' owner of what is considered a global heritage. Turkey has many Greek antiquities in its territory. So does Italy. The implied fear is that Turkey will undertake to represent Greek antiquities. Claims to the title-deeds of Greek antiquities by neighbouring peoples are translated into territorial threats against Greece. The whole enterprise of sending the antiquities abroad then takes the form of a battle in which antiquities become the fighters, and offence is the best defense.

A similar position is held by a professor of Prehistoric Archaeology, Spiridon Iakovidis, ex-director of antiquities and member of the Greek Academy in Athens. He prefers to support his arguments in favour of sending the antiquities abroad by illustrating the positive results that such an exhibition may have, using a comparison with an exhibition organised by Egypt (ibid: 57-58).

The exhibition of Tutankhamun toured all over America, and Egypt found a place on the map. It didn't exist before. The Americans started discussing Egypt, Egypt's heritage, and since that day I tell you – I experienced it – the attitude of various senators in the Congress, who are average Americans, started changing towards Egypt and finally towards Israel...

Antiquities, according to the above quotation, are able to secure a place on the map as they situate a country in time and in space. Through the institution of the museum, an exhibition sanctifies the reality that it presents. In other words, sending antiquities abroad is exchanging historical time, as embodied in antiquities, with political recognition. However, it is not just a decent position within the world that Greeks generally ask for. The issue of the exchange of Greek cultural capital for political support is raised repeatedly. In the following citation, the price expected in return becomes more concrete. Konstandinos Papapanos, a former high-ranking employee of the Ministry of Education, says (ibid: 41):

What happened with the other 49 Greek exhibitions that were organised [in the past abroad]? 29 of them took place in the USA. What is the attitude of the American government and its policy towards us? It kept helping Turkey both on the military and the financial level. Occupation of Cyprus. American archaeologists are indifferent towards the drain of Cypriot antiquities by the Turks and then Turkey demands airspace, the Aegean sea and sea-shelf, it creates the Muslim crescent around the Balkans and day

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22 The Greek Academy is an institution equivalent to the French Académie des Lettres et des Beaux Arts, consisting of pre-eminent representatives of disciplines, sciences and arts aiming at the encouragement and the enhancement of their areas.
after day it becomes more and more insolent and impudent. To what extent did these 29 exhibitions contribute to change in American politics regarding our national issues? You know that national politics are not designed and they are not materialised on the basis of such criteria, especially today when immorality dominates internationally. Everything is judged according to interests and not according to exhibitions and similar activities.

The negative outcome of the cultural expedition as described above is attributed to the immorality of the times, wherein the love for civilisation cannot beat economic or political interests. The negative attitude that confronts Greece in its efforts to establish a secure and honourable position internationally serves as an argument against the idea of sending the antiquities abroad. Vassilios Petrakos, the General Secretary of the Archaeological Society at Athens, says:

Should 21 Greek masterpieces of the 5th century BC be expatriated to the USA and be displayed in a foreign land, participating in this way unwittingly in festivities which have nothing to do with the ideas they represent or inspire, in festivities which will remind us of relevant ones which took place in a neighbouring peninsula after 146 BC? (ibid: 26-27)

The festivities to which Petrakos refers are those that followed the defeat of Greece by the Romans. General Mummius, the Roman conqueror of Greece, transferred Greek works of art back to Rome. Here the planned exhibition is compared to the Roman conqueror's celebrations in Rome, where Greek antiquities were taken around as loot demonstrating the Roman power. Characterising the West as an expansionist force plundering Greece is not something new. In another issue of the newsletter of ASA (EDAE 8, 1989), an article signed with the initials XBP criticises a book by J.H. Merryman (1988), *The Retention of Cultural Property*. According to XBP, Merryman advocates the opinion that humankind has a common cultural heritage. In this cultural community (*politismiki kinopolitia*) there are two kinds of nations: the 'Source Nations' (those which provide their old heritage) and the 'Market Nations' (those which import cultural goods). According to XBP, Merryman, following liberal views, considers antiquities to be objects for exchange and blames the Source Nations for putting restrictions on the exportation of their heritage with the support of UNESCO. Merryman's views provoke strong feelings in XBP. He writes (ibid: 18):

[...] Mr. Merryman fails to say that the global civilisation which he discusses is the Western one which was violently imposed on almost the whole planet. Many peoples neither had nor have the desire to be absorbed by it and it is a major insult, after conquering and destroying their
traditional ways of lives, to loot their creations as spoils in order to increase the prestige of the winner. A winner who treats his spoils as plain bric-a-brac – I don’t believe that the kouros of New York has any cultural meaning for any American. It is a good investment either as capital or as an interest-bearing object. The same goes for the development of the archaeological discipline. For the Greeks, it is a research and study of their ancestors’ history, which means self-knowledge, while for most of the others it is at best a very noble career...

For XBP globalisation means expansion of Western imperialism over smaller national units, resulting in the homogenisation of cultures. Thus, globalisation is considered as another Western colonialist expedition in which antiquities become the spoils of an expansionist war. As such they cannot evoke in Westerners the same genuine feelings that they evoke in the Greeks. This fits in with the discussion about the false content of ‘philhellenism’ by the same author in another issue of the Newsletter (EDAE 13, 1990). Philhellenism is regarded as a Western invasion, the result of which is the plundering of Greek monuments. XBP cannot hide his bitterness about the fact that the adoration of the ancient past by Westerners is opposed to their contempt for the Greek present. The discussion about the origins of philhellenism illuminates the bad feelings towards the West which have accumulated in modern Greek history. It is used to argue against the concept of a global culture as we saw it earlier on:

[…] Any harmful actions by foreigners towards us might not be because of their hatred of Greece…but on account of the plain pursuit of their interests. This is of no importance to us. The result is the same. Given that, in whatever internal situation, we will remain a weak country, it would be at least a delusion to be drawn by the charm of the ‘world without boundaries’ and give up the very few elements which distinguish us from others and give us power. And this is especially the case as far as antiquities are concerned. For better or worse the contemporary Greek state based its ideology on our special and unique relation with antiquity. If we abandon this ideology and accept that our antiquities are part of a ‘common cultural heritage’ of all humankind then, losing what distinguishes us, we will remain a people without a past, and with a present which does not inspire either fear or respect (ibid: 143).

The idea of this text is that Greece, being a weak country, draws its power from antiquities, not only because they are unique but also because the Greeks do not have a present which is valued by others. They are therefore their only weapon for political survival. The political role of archaeology and antiquity is obvious here. Antiquities are the very vehicles of Greek identity, the ones which constitute the specific
distinction between the Greek nation and the rest of the nations, the ones which empower the nation and provide it with the equipment that is needed to make it 'inspire fear or respect'. That is why the possibility of damage or loss of antiquities during their transportation for an exhibition abroad is equated with national loss provoking feelings of 'agony' [sic] (O Mendor 20, 1992: 36). For Fanni Drosoyánni, a Byzantine archaeologist and éforos of antiquities, 'the fact that Kritias' boy can end up at the bottom of the Atlantic and that this fact will be irreversible is utterly determinative and absolutely horrifying' (ibid: 70).  

The whole issue of sending the antiquities abroad is epitomised in the words of the Professor of classical archaeologist at the University of Athens, Vassíli Lambrinúdáki. After referring to the national and global role of Greek antiquity he concludes (ibid: 45):

It becomes obvious that the relics of our past which are within our present day boundaries are part of our national heritage, for which we are responsible and which we must safeguard like the apples of our eye. No exportation, no concession to any other people is allowed. The direct contact of other peoples with our monuments is, however, a must [...].

The national and global aspects of Greek heritage are both present and competing against each other every time the latter is involved in issues of Greek international affairs. The global aspect, however, is present only as long as it serves the local, namely it reminds the world of its 'debts' (Skopetéa 1988: 211) to Greece and of the position the latter deserves in the contemporary world. Although Greek heritage needs to circulate around the world, at the same time it needs to return to re-assemble the body of the nation-state that it represents.

In this section I described a case of 'exportation' of Hellenism. In the following section I will discuss a case where Hellenism asks to be imported back to Greece. As I will demonstrate, these are two processes that follow the same logic.

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23 Kritias' boy is a 5th cent. BC statue (Acropolis Museum).
IV.C. REQUEST FOR REPATRIATION/RESTITUTION OF HELLENISM

A number of studies on ‘the politics of heritage’ (to name but a few examples, Gathercole and Lowenthal 1994, Greenfield 1996, Karp and Lavine 1991) has shown that antiquities can become representations of contested identities, tools loaded with meanings in the negotiation of rights and interests, especially between local communities and their former colonisers. Although Greece has never been colonised in the literal sense, it has experienced direct foreign interference in its political system and life since the beginning of its life as a nation-state. Statements by the British Museum, such as those implying or even explicitly stating the inability of Greece to protect its heritage, and justifying the B.M.’s decision to shoulder the responsibility of keeping classical works of art, allude to older experiences of foreign intervention and reinforce already strong feelings against foreign hegemony. In the previous section we saw that antiquities can be visualised as ‘spoils’ when in foreign hands. In a similar way they can also become signifiers of the Greek nation-state and the medium of claims and interests. Melina Merkúri, ex-Minister of Culture and well-known for her crusade for the restitution of the Parthenon marbles, said in an interview with a British journalist (Ependitis 15-16/3/97):

I was born – and I believe all Greek children are born – thinking that in a way we built the Acropolis and the Parthenon. It is our heritage, our identity. Asking for the return of its parts is a political act, an act of independence. (emphasis added)

That is a strange thing to say about a people who have had their independence for almost two centuries now. However, the issue of the Parthenon marbles has been linked to questions of Greece’s ability to take on responsibilities without foreign patronage. Note that one of the arguments of the B.M. against the return of the Parthenon marbles to Greece is that Greece in unable to protect them. This attitude may in part explain that the claim for the marbles’ restitution is a political statement against any patronising attitude by foreign powers. The claim made here is that the Greek nation-state has passed the stage of its infancy and has become mature, ready to take over its property without needing guardians any more. In a talk at a UNESCO meeting in Mexico City (29/7/82), Melína Merkúri said (Diary 1998):
Dear friends, it was the Englishman Hobhouse, the future Lord Bronkton, on a visit to Athens in 1809, who gave us this striking illustration: an elderly Greek man approached him and in a voice trembling with bitterness says: ‘You English have taken from us the work of our ancestors. Look after them well, because the day will come when the Greeks will ask for them back’.

There is nothing we need to add to that. Our English friends have indeed looked after our marbles well; and now, with a very firm voice, we are asking for them back.24

Any claim of ownership is at the same time asking for affirmation of independence, accountability and responsibility, which Greece asks to have acknowledged internationally. The issue of the Parthenon marbles’ restitution, however, is not only a matter of Greece asking for recognition that it is on a par with the other European states. It should be seen also in relation to more regional frictions that Greek politics encounters. Here I quote two students, the first from the 6th GR and the second from the 4th GR school. For them the restitution of the Parthenon marbles would serve to underline the territorial rights of Greece in the political arenas of the Balkans and the Mediterranean:

6th GR: What is most important is that the Acropolis denotes our national continuity, i.e. that the Greek people existed even from the past, as the Acropolis is a creation of the past. This is very important because this people has an asset compared to others who might have claims on some Greek territories.

4th GR: My feelings for the Acropolis are the same as of every Greek. However, for me as a child, it means something more: with all that war against my country by its neighbours who question even the Greekness of Macedonia, I resist by promoting the Greek monuments. I become more attached to Greece and especially to the Acropolis, the ‘representative’ of Greece… As our ancestors used to say ‘a country without a past is a country without a future’.

If the Acropolis and antiquities in general are representations of Greek identity as I showed in the previous chapter, then the demand for their restitution could stand as a metaphor for Hellenism’s repatriation. In the last years the Greeks have been going through many struggles for the return of their heritage. They wanted to ‘bring the Olympic Games back to their homeland’ and ‘to bring the Parthenon marbles back

24 Compare the words by the Greek novelist Grigorios Xenopoulos (1867-1951) (1930: 378-381): ‘There is no reason for Britain to guard [the Elgin marbles] for us any more. We are free and strong enough to guard them’.
home where they belong’. The claim for the restitution of Greek heritage could thus be seen both as a request to re-territorialise and to repatriate the global, ‘world’ heritage to its local homeland. But here it sounds as if we encounter a paradox: on the one hand Hellenism is praised for its global/ecumenical character, transcending national borders, while on the other its (local) contenders claim it back, trying to draw borders and to re-trench their territory.

This resembles Appadurai’s (1990) analysis of modern-day globalisation. De-territorialisation, he says, is one of the main forces in the post-modern world, in the sense that national borders become irrelevant in the way people, money, technology, media and ideas circulate around the world. On the other hand, there is a re-territorialisation in the sense that there is a ‘resurgence of national, regional, ethnic and territorial attachments’. This relates directly to the ‘embattled’ relationship between nation and state (ibid: 303). “That is, while nations (or more properly groups with ideas about nationhood) seek to capture or co-opt states and state power, states simultaneously seek to capture and monopolise ideas about nationhood” (ibid). The Greek case is similar, except that globalisation of the Greek cultural and intellectual heritage is a much older phenomenon than the one described by Appadurai. On the one hand ‘ecumenical’ (de-territorialised) Hellenism is praised while on the other, following the principle of nation-states, Greeks try to draw borders and entrench their territory. The building of the Acropolis Museum, which is planned to receive the ‘diasporic’ Parthenon marbles, can stand as a perfect metaphor of the desire to re-territorialise Hellenism. The Acropolis Museum provides a ‘home’ for the Parthenon marbles, reinforcing the claim that they belong to Greece: even if they do not arrive there, they will be noted through their absence.

Requesting the return of Greek heritage does not mean constraining its world-range. On the contrary, by achieving its restitution the prestige of Greece is restored, because it means acknowledgement by Europe that Greece is the legitimate owner. As another 18-year-old student puts it (5th GR):

They must definitely come back, and if someone wants to see them then they have to come here and not to Britain. The marbles cannot be conceived without Greece and Greece cannot be conceived without them, its cultural heritage which proves its glory. (emphasis added)
I see the request for the restitution of Greek heritage as a way for Greece to claim that Hellenism belongs in the West, i.e. it is global, but it belongs to Greece, i.e. it is local. In this procedure of Greece negotiating its identity and trying to create its space, not just physically, but also symbolically, the request for the repatriation of Greek heritage stands as a request for re-territorialisation of a glory that global Hellenism has appropriated.

In the case of the Olympic Games we also have a ‘local’ heritage which has become global and the repatriation of which is demanded, exactly as in the case of the Elgin marbles. Greece has been applying to host the Olympic Games for several years now, but this has been refused because of lack of infrastructure and logistical capabilities. This reinforces the Greeks’ image of Greece as a country trying to catch up and being passed over repeatedly. The national humiliation that followed the refusal of the global community to grant to Greece what the latter considers its legitimate heritage has been repeatedly revealed either in Greek libels against the powerful countries or in extended outbursts of self-criticism.

Figure 25: Billy Paine in To Vima (14/7/96) with the comment ‘He’s the one who “stole” the 1996 Olympics from us’.

Figure 25 appeared on the first page of a newspaper (To Vima 14/7/96) on the occasion of Greece having lost the competition to stage the 1996 centennial Olympic Games to Atlanta. Billy Paine, one of the major protagonists of the Atlanta campaign features in this photo, which is accompanied by the title: ‘He is the one who “stole” the 1996 Olympic Games from us’. The choice of this photo to illustrate the act of the
Olympic Games 'robbery' is not coincidental. In a powerful, almost arrogant way, Billy Paine makes Olympic rings of smoke with his cigar, looking as if he has complete rule over the ring. With just one hand, he manages to raise his armchair from the ground, implying his literal and metaphorical power. This image is in tune with the Greek feeling that the Olympic Games are in the hands of the powerful, among whom the Greeks do not belong.

Figure 26: Vúla Patulídu after her victory in sprint in the Olympic games of 1992 (source: E. Skiadás' archive).

Finally, in 1997 Greece was granted the right to host the Olympic Games of the year 2004. The Olympic Committee's decision was received triumphantly in Greece. In fact, since then there has been a wide mobilisation to have the new Acropolis Museum ready to accommodate the expatriated Parthenon marbles by the year 2004. The idea is that Hellenism will thus be celebrated in its complete restitution.

However, even before Greece was granted the organisation of the Olympic Games, there were moments when it was felt that Hellenism was already starting to be re-territorialised to Greece. An event illustrating this is the following: just after Atlanta was named as the venue for the 1996 Games, Vúla Patulídu, a Greek athlete, won a gold medal in 1992 in sprint (Figure 26). She is a figure who has made history in Greece, not just because she won a gold medal, but because when she won it she
exclaimed *Yia tin Elláda re gamóto*, ‘For Greece, for fuck’s sake!’ Although it might sound strange, this phrase made thousands of Greeks smile and cry at the same time at the night of her victory. The gloss of the cry ‘For Greece, for fuck’s sake’ cannot render its full meaning in English. It encompasses a folk, unpretentious, warmth, which implies a grudge against the image of Greece as a country which history always leaves behind and a determination to prove its worth. The glory which the global community had refused Greece, namely the right to celebrate the restitution of the Olympics in Athens on the occasion of their centenary, was now being taken back by Greece in the form of a gold medal.

Apart from Patulídou, some of the other Greek Olympic medallists had similar reactions. Pírrros Dímas, a Greek from a Greek village in Albania, who won a gold medal in weight-lifting both in 1992 and in 1996, is also a figure treated with great affection within Greece. What moved many Greeks was that a young man who was brought up under the regime of Enver Hodja, outside the borders of the Greek state, turned out to be so devoted to Greece and so keen in granting it a medal. In fact, in 1992 while he was lifting the weight that finally granted him the medal, he cried *ýía tin Elláda* - ‘For Greece’, another moment for Greeks to remember. In the Greeks’ feelings, crying ‘for Greece’ at that particular moment was like forcing the globe to turn eyes towards Greece at the moment of its victory. At that moment Greece became the weight that Pírrros Dímas lifted and placed on the pedestal of victory. I believe that through their exclamations, both Vúla Patulídou and Pírrros Dímas re-territorialised Hellenism after Atlanta had been named as the host of the centennial games. And that was even more important, as the victories took place in the contested field of the Olympic Games.

In the case of the ‘exportation’ of antiquities for exhibition abroad as well as in the case of the claim for the repatriation of Greek cultural heritage, we encounter the same situation: Hellenism tries to remain both local and global. The need for the circulation of Hellenism is felt, while at the same time the need for its national reassembly is required. Even the terminology used is similar in the two cases: it is believed that the Greek national body cannot survive as a totality when its expatriated members are abroad, while at the same time being abroad means manifesting Hellenism all over the world.

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I will end with an example which offers a perfect synopsis of the interplay between the local and the global in relation to the Greek case as I have described it here. On the Euro-coins, one side will be the European one – the same for all member countries. The reverse side will be the national one, the depiction on which will be chosen by each member-country separately. Greece has decided that the Parthenon marbles should be depicted on the national side of the Greek Euro coin. According to the Greek member of the European Parliament who suggested the idea originally:

> Every coin will be a proclamation. It will be carrying the electric charge in support of the repatriation of the Parthenon sculptures. [...] Europe is being unified into a common coin. Berlin was unified years ago. Only the Parthenon remains divided with a wall of shame that Lord Elgin created and which is sustained today by the British government’ (Kathimerini 5/4/98).

This decision makes the Euro-coin a material manifestation of the local-global contest: by depicting the Elgin marbles on the national side of the Greek Euro-coin, Greece puts an advertisement of a local claim into global circulation. It reproduces the global image of the Greek heritage, while at the same time it reminds the world of ‘whom this belongs to’.

### IV.D. REVIVAL – RESTORATION – REGENERATION

I would like now to refer to another kind of repatriation, and this does not refer to space, but to time. It is the revival of aspects of ancient Greek civilisation in the modern Greek state. David Lowenthal (1985) has suggested that ‘the past is a foreign country’. I would paraphrase his sentence to ‘the past is another country’ and, therefore, revival could be seen as another form of re-territorialisation.

With the establishment of the new nation-state the belief that Hellenism was *re-born* and *re-generated* was cultivated. The nation-building process which started with the War of Independence was referred to as *Paliggenesia* (regeneration-renaissance), a term which conveys the notion of the resurrection of the ‘past glories’ of classical Greece (Skopetéa 1988: 207). As a matter of fact, in 1933 the centennial celebrations of the liberation of Athens took place on the Acropolis on Easter Day, chosen for the symbolic connotations of the Resurrection (Papageorgiou Venetas 1994: 390) (Figure 27).
It is interesting how this revival was conceived in its materialisation. If classical antiquity was one of the new nation-state's representations, then it should not be surprising that together with the *revival* of the Hellenic people, the *restoration* of Greek antiquities was among the first priorities of the state. The Greek nation was dug up from the soil where it had been buried for years and years, and it was resurrected.

**Figure 27:** Drawing showing captain Dimitri from Híos hoisting the Greek flag for the first free Easter on the Acropolis (source: Papageorgiou Venetas 1994).

Together with the restoration, the *renaming* of the Christian population living on the Greek peninsula took place. Earlier regional names, such as Romii, *Hristianí* (Christians), or *Kritikí* (people from Crete), *Moraítes* (people from the Peloponnese) etc., which were used for self-definition before the Greek War of Independence, were all replaced by the name *Éllines* (*Hellenes*), which evoked the name of classical Greeks, very soon after the War broke out (e.g. Politis 1993: 33-35). Similarly, classical Greek personal names became extremely fashionable at the beginning of the 19th century, in many cases replacing a tradition of giving Christian names (Dimarás 1989).
It is within this spirit that the revival of the Olympic Games (1896) should be seen.\textsuperscript{25} The idea behind the restored Panathenaic Stadium in the 1890s was to accommodate the revival of the Olympic Games on Greek soil, to be expanded into a global competition for all nations, under the auspices of Greece. The Stadium was rebuilt virtually from scratch at great expense, although its oblong shape was from the beginning considered unsuitable for modern athletic games.

Performances of ancient drama in ancient settings are another aspect of the same desire for the revival of ancient Greek civilisation, and they have occurred as early as 1867. For the purposes of reviving ancient drama, many ancient Greek open-air theatres were put into use again (e.g. Epidaurus, Dodona, Philippi, and Athens) (Papageorgiou-Venetas 1994: 378-380).\textsuperscript{26}

There are several examples that one would be able to give to illustrate Greek efforts to revive Classical Greek antiquity, which I will not cite here. What I should note, however, is that rendering life to Ancient Greece in a contemporary setting is a way to re-territorialise (regain) the glory that it represents to contemporary Greece. Stoller (1995) has demonstrated how, through emulating colonial figures in possession rituals, people in the Republic of Niger feel that they appropriate some of their power. They revive this power for themselves and thus they take it over. In a similar way contemporary Greeks imitate the past in order to appropriate its power. Moreover, they make this past theirs again because they revive it on their contemporary ground. Through performing the past (e.g. in ancient drama) the Greeks activate their national identities. Reviving is a mimesis, and mimesis is 'a metonymy of presence' (Bhabha 1994), reminding everyone that ancient classical civilisation is still here, in the place where it was first born in flesh and blood.

As Leach (1961, cited in Bloch and Parry 1982: 9) has argued, religious ideology uses the promise of rebirth to negate the finality of death. It merges the experience of birth and death, thus entangling them in a cyclical process whereby the one follows the other and establishing a continuation of life. Bloch (1982), on the other hand, has

\textsuperscript{25} For the national importance of the Olympic Games revival see Kulũri 1997.

\textsuperscript{26} I should also mention the Delphic celebrations of 1927 and 1930, which involved not only performances of ancient drama, but also performances of ancient dances, torch-races, as well as performances of Greek folk dances and songs, among many others.
emphasised the political nature of this cyclical process of renewal. He associates duration and contingency of events with the efforts of authority to establish its conceptualisation as belonging to an eternal and unchanging order. In the following chapters I intend to discuss at greater length the similarities between the nationalist and the religious ideology. Here I will confine myself to the suggestion that Greek nationalist ideology works in a similar way: the nation-state cultivates the idea that it was reborn after a long time of Ottoman 'slavery'. It thus establishes the conviction of continuity in the life of the Greek nation-state since the classical ages.

The concept of continuity thus becomes intimately linked with the notion of immortality. The Acropolis is a monument/memorial of the glorious past, which epitomises the Greek nation's continuity throughout the centuries. As we saw in the previous chapter, since the establishment of the Greek state there has been a series of efforts to revive the Acropolis' former glory (e.g. restoring the archaeological site and 'cleaning' it from elements linked with its 'dark ages' that negate this idea of continuity). The claim for the restitution of the Parthenon marbles not only illustrates the effort to keep the Acropolis immortal throughout the centuries, but it also evidences the intimate relationship between re-territorialisation and revival: in Greece, emigration is often perceived as a symbolic death. The restitution of the expatriated Parthenon marbles is thus both a re-territorialisation as well as a revival.

I would now like to compare claims over antiquities with claims over names. I suggest that they work in very similar ways and that names are also used in the process of reviving and re-territorialising ancient Greece. They are potent symbols for establishing a connection between time and space.

IV.E. NAMES, POWER AND THE CLAIMS OF IDENTITY

Sutton (1997; 1998: 181-193) has tried to show how nationalist ideologies become important to people, as the latter perceive them through local-level practices such as kinship. He has discussed the ways in which naming systems work to establish continuity between the present and the past, not only at the level of family linkages, but also at the level of national history. He also stresses the relationship between naming practices and property rights in both systems of kinship and nationalism. He
thus brings up the analogy between two discourses: the one referring to the Greek custom whereby a child together with the name of a relative inherits also the relative's property, and the one accompanying the national 'battle' that Greece fought over the name of Macedonia, based on the argument that 'Macedonia is a Greek property by right', since the name signifies a Greek region.

Figure 28: An election leaflet of the Left Alliance party (Sinaspismós), circulated before the 1994 European parliamentary elections. The party announces its intention to fight for the return of the Parthenon marbles by crossing out the names 'Elgin marbles' and 'British Museum' and substituting them with The Parthenon marbles' and 'The Acropolis Museum'. Source: Hamilakis 1999.

Apart from the well-known Greek objection to allow FYROM to be called 'Republic of Macedonia', which has already been discussed in anthropological works (Danforth 1984; 1993; 1995, Karakasidou 1993; 1994, Sutton 1997; 1998), there is a series of other examples illustrating the ideological significance of names' conferral and use in Greece (e.g. Herzfeld 1982b). As Herzfeld notes, through naming systems one can study the interplay between identity and power as well as the ways in which social relationships are constructed and experienced. Although Herzfeld's study refers to Greek baptismal names, following Sutton we could extend his argument to the domain of national names and names in general. Here I will discuss two cases: the first one is the Greek request for changing the name 'Greece' into 'Hellas'. The
second is the claim that the sculptures that Lord Elgin removed from the Acropolis should not be called ‘Elgin’, but ‘Parthenon marbles’ (Figure 28).

Recently several Greek voices have suggested that the international names Greece and Greeks should be abolished and the names Hellas and Hellenes should take their place. Hellas is the ancient Greek name for Greece. It is also the name modern Greeks have chosen to refer to their country. In 1980 the philosophy professor and General Secretary of the Academy of Athens, Ioannis Theodorakopoulos had requested linguistic research of this issue (Andi 576 (1995): 38). In the following years the matter was discussed sporadically until a program of the Piraeus Church radio station (March, 10 1995) brought up the issue again. The program’s editor suggested that the name Greece should change into Hellas. Since then many individuals have expressed their desire for the name-change:

An illustrative example is that of a professor of clinical surgery who sent four letters to the newspaper Kathimerini (24 and 26/6/1981, 2/8/83, 6/7/91, 7/2/98) complaining about the names Romios and Grekos and asking to ban them from the Greek vocabulary replacing them by Hellen. The first one, he claimed, recalls the Roman domination and it has a degrading meaning. The Turks, he argued, used the name Rum by fraud in order to estrange the Greeks from their glorious past. The second, he continued, must be banned because it is connected to the Latin Graeci, Graecia, Graecus and, the worst, to Graeculus, which means a decadent Roman citizen. In any case, all these names – according to him – are more recent and have been used only occasionally and in short periods of the Greek national life. The professor then tried to prove historically that it is ‘the name Hellen that was the first and more dominant name of the Greeks’ and that ‘this is the one expressing the continuity of the Greek race throughout centuries’. 27

27 It is widely accepted that the Greeks who inhabited the area of ancient Dodona were called Greki by their Illyrian neighbours until the name Hellenes was established. A few centuries after Christianity arrived, the name Hellenes was linked with paganism, and thus the names Greki and Romii prevailed until the establishment of the Greek state (Babiniotis 1998). The question of what the national name of Greeks would be after the establishment of the Greek state was raised as early as the 18th century. The alternatives were: Hellenes, Greki, Romii (Romans). The Patriarchate preferred the name Romii which was reminiscent of Byzantium, rather than the Hellenes which had paganistic connotations (Tziòvas 1989: 43). On the other hand, the representatives of the Greek Enlightenment wanted to break the links with the obscurantist Byzantium and they rejected the name Romii. According to Tziòvas the name Greki was a compromise between the name Romii preferred by the Patriarchate and the Hellenes advocated by the representatives of the Greek Enlightenment. Finally, in the first national assembly of Epidaurus in 1822 the name Hellenes prevailed (ibid: 44).
In a similar vein, an anonymous reader of an economic magazine (Ικονομικός Ταξιδιώμος 16/9/93) complains because foreigners, instead of using the names Hellenes and Hellas, use the names Greeks and Greece, which are of Turkish origin (giaúris).28

Herzfeld (1982b: 299) maintains that claims about identity can sometimes be made by shifting the category ascription of a particular name, e.g. by treating a baptismal or a surname as a nickname (paratsükli). I suggest that in the words of the two people quoted above the names Greece and Hellas seem to belong to two different categories. The name Hellas is conceived as the formal and official name of Greece (something like a surname), while Greece is considered to be a paratsükli, i.e. a name attributed to the original Hellas in a later period referring to the inferior position of the Greeks under the Ottoman empire. Thus, Greece is not a name conveyed through generations, like a surname, or conferred by the family and sanctified through a religious practice, like a baptismal name. Herzfeld says that ‘when the nickname becomes a surname, the bearer is thereby registered (gráfete, written) as a bureaucratic category token’. In this respect, the ‘nickname’ Greece has been registered as a surname and the restitution of the ‘authentic’ and ‘original’ Hellas is requested.

Several people, including intellectuals, have expressed the opinion that changing the name Greece is pointless. Many of them, however, do not base this argument on the insignificance of the whole matter, but on the name’s authenticity. Thus some (among them the ex-president of Greece, Ηρώς Σαρτζέτακης, Ανδρι 16/9/93), in an effort to restore the validity of the name Greece, have tried to prove in historical terms that the names Greece and Greeks are not only Greek in origin, but that they are even older than the name Hellas (compare a similar view of an archaeologist, Καθημερινή 7/7/96).

The request to change the name Greece into Hellas meant in a way bringing Hellas, with all its connotations, back to Greece. Although Greece is the name used by the international community, it is the name Hellas that represents global Hellenism. Hellas was the name of ancient Greece which has travelled around the world to

28 As I said, the names Greece and Greeks do not derive from the word giaúris, which is of Turkish origin. This is an incorrect etymology, often mistakenly reproduced by Greeks.
designate the cradle of classicism and it is Hellas (the vision of ancient Greece) that foreign travellers from the 17th century onwards were after. Greece, on the other hand, is a very localised name, as it refers to the contemporary Greek state, rather than the diachronic and dispersed Hellenism. As we saw earlier, Greek antiquities and Greeks of the diaspora are believed to be representatives of Greece abroad. Thus, it is not surprising that the issue of the name of Greece abroad also aggravated several Greeks of the diaspora. A common Greek phrase referring to the need of people to insist on their dignity is Yia éna onoma zúme ('It is for a name that we live’). Staining one’s name (amávrosi tu onómatos) is staining one’s dignity. The use of a ‘wrong’ name for Greece abroad also affected the image of Greeks abroad, who protested for this reason on several occasions.

An American Greek sent a letter to the newspaper To Vima (24/11/96) complaining that official organisations, such as the State Post Office of the USA, do not recognise the term Hellas. He concludes: ‘I wonder why we do not decide to inform the international society that we are Hellenes’. Similar rhetorical questions, e.g. ‘So, [will we be] Hellenes or Grekí in our international appearance?’ (To Vima 3/12/95) are often addressed. They display an urge to persuade the international society that ‘we are Hellenes’ and to remind it of the intimate links between ancestors and their descendants. This urge, I believe, has its roots much earlier in Greek history, in the first days of Greece as a new nation-state: in 1830 the Austrian historian Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer put forward his theories questioning the origins of modern Greeks from the ancient Greeks. These views reflected a more general predisposition of ‘the West’ towards the Greeks of the newly established Greek state. As the Greek historian Aléxis Politís writes (1993: 26):

The modern Greeks were not corresponding to the idyllic image the Western Europeans had created: they were short, ugly, with crooked noses - nothing to do with those all-white, vigorous statues! They had neither Plato’s wisdom, nor Socrates’ resignation, nor Aristides’ unblemished patriotism […] Those uneducated orientals might be picturesque, but they could not possibly claim the right to the heritage from classical Greece, which was the very ideal of every European middle-class society.

Fallmerayer’s views obviously turned the cosmology of modern Greeks upside-down. The most valuable aspect of their national existence, namely their origin from the ancient Greeks, had been questioned on the grounds of historical arguments. This is
the framework within which we should also look at complaints such as the following, expressed by a journalist attending the Olympic Games in Atlanta (Kathimerini 28/7/96):

The Americans did not know our flag [...] One called us Argentineans, another one Finns, and another one Uruguays. And when you were telling them 'Hellas', they were asking what that was. Unfortunately, you had to say 'Greece' in order for them to understand. Even on the athletes' T-shirts Hellas is not Hellas, but Greece! I wonder why?

The journalist implies that although the international community knows the meaning and the importance of the Olympic Games as well as the spirit of Hellenism that gave birth to them, it seems that it ignores who the contemporary Hellenes are. As a matter of fact English speakers in general (apart from classicists) refer to 'ancient Greece' and not 'Hellas'. They only know the adjective 'Hellenic', but not the noun underlying it. This is a linguistic reality, which in Greece is perceived as a refusal to accept that Greece is no different from Hellas and that Greeks are Hellenes. In other words, it is a refusal that Hellenism of today is the most respected and well-praised global classical Hellenism.

In a paper of Kathimerini (20/1/98) a journalist reports the opinion of a Greek of the diaspora who, while watching a polo match between Greece and Canada, brought up the question of why Greece should be called Greece and not Hellas:

'It is not right' he said 'for a country with such a history to allow the distortion of its name'. When someone in the group remarked that it is difficult for a country to change its name within the international organisations, the Greek of the diaspora revolted: 'But this is impossible! When African countries impose their new name in record time, can't Greece simply restitute its proper name?' [...] (emphasis added)

Names thus acquire materiality like history and become 'heritage', treated like a property, which is claimed back especially in moments and in fields of contest, such as the polo game between Greece and Canada or the Olympic Games.

If names, as Sutton argued, establish property rights, then foreign products cannot bear the name Hellas, as that belongs to Greece. On Dec. 3rd, 1995, a text in the Greek newspaper To Vima reported:

The National Society 'Hellas', which was founded by shipowners of London as well as intellectuals and artists, will apply for the change of the
international name of the country from Greece, as established during the last centuries, into Hellas. The reasons are several. The following argument, however, is impressive: according to international legislation it is prohibited that commercial goods bear the name of a country. There is, however, evidence that commercial directors of foreign companies have started using the classical glamour of the name ‘Hellas’. In Northern Europe, the Finnish chocolate ‘Hellas’ already circulates, while God knows what other products our ancient splendour can name (To Vima 3/12/95).

Appropriating the name Hellas means keeping it intact from foreign ‘abuse’. The issue of the commodification and consumption of Greek heritage will be examined in more detail in the following chapter. Here I only use the above-cited example to show how a name can be a tool for contesting Hellenism.

It is within a similar framework that we should look at the claim over another name: in both private and public discussions about the restitution of the Parthenon marbles in Greece, the opinion is often heard that the marbles should not be called Elgin, but Parthenon. Before discussing this issue, I would like to point out that there are cases where a collective noun becomes a name specifying only a subset of the objects the literal noun denominates. The Parthenon marbles are known among Greeks as simply ‘the marbles’. Such names can afford to be shortened without losing the uniqueness that they denote. The term ‘marbles’ in its generality can evoke the qualities each one wants to ascribe to them. A further specification can either add nothing to its meaning or only emphasise a particular aspect of it. Thus, the adjective ‘Elgin’ can be considered ‘obtrusive’ as it highlights the importance of this person in the shaping of the history of the contested marbles. When a BBC journalist asked Melina Merkúri whether Greece was able to protect the Elgin marbles she answered:

My sweet boy, I only happen to know the Parthenon marbles. Elgin, your ancestor, I only know him as a thief. Therefore we cannot possibly be referring to the same thing. In any case, if what you refer to are the Parthenon marbles I will answer to you: no, my sweet boy, we cannot protect them. We Greeks are primitive. We still live in caves and we eat raw meat with our hands…

Several informants also protested when I used the term ‘Elgin’ rather than ‘Parthenon’ marbles. A middle-class lady explained to me: ‘We cannot possibly name the marbles “Elgin”, after the thief!’ In other words, calling the Parthenon marbles “Elgin” means for them attributing the negative, polluting qualities of Elgin to the marbles. Herzfeld says that ‘name conferral makes a statement about the recipient’s identity, while the
subsequent use of the name in address and reference implies the degree to which that identity is acknowledged or challenged by others' (1982b: 288). Accepting and using the name ‘Elgin’ rather than ‘Parthenon’ is equated by that lady with acknowledging that the contested marbles’ identity is defined by Elgin. Moreover, as Stewart notes (1991: 55), (personal) names on Naxos (as well as in several other places in Greece) link an individual with a nuclear family, a larger lineage and the community. Similarly, the name ‘Parthenon marbles’ creates an intentional link with the perceived identity as belonging to the Parthenon, Hellas and modern Greece. Calling them ‘Elgin’ marbles denies this link and replaces it with incompatible associations.

In Greece, as we know from Stewart (1991: 215), if you can find out the name of the demon possessing you and you are able to address it by name then ipso facto you control it and can exorcise it. In other words, knowledge of a name means possession and subordination of the spirit. Calling the marbles ‘Elgin’ is a similar act of possession and subordination. For example, an archaeologist, referring to the name of the ‘marbles’, exclaimed: ‘This is ridiculous! The marbles are not Elgin’s, but the Parthenon’s’. In other words, the issue of the name becomes a question of where the antiquities belong. It conveys the seal of the owner, the certificate of the marbles’ origin, which cannot be other than Greek. Names thus attain a certain materiality as they become linked to a particular bodily or social self. The conveyor of the marbles’ name is the one entitled to enjoy the rights of succession. A little girl in a private school of Athens said: ‘[The marbles] should not be named “Elgin”, because it is not right for the Louvre [sic] to take advantage of the Greek sites.’ According to this mentality it is not fair for a foreign people to become famous or rich through the manipulation of somebody else’s property (cf. Sutton 1997; 1998).

Marilyn Strathern (1979), discussing body decorations in Mount Hagen, has criticised the tendency to draw ‘a contrast between body and soul, between physical appearance and individuality, between an outer shell and an inner identity’. She suggests that decorating the body is a way to manifest the inner self, the body becoming the medium for making the self apparent. Decorations on the actor’s body, she says, ‘are symbols of himself turned inside out’. Setting out from Greek sayings during the ‘battle’ over the name of Macedonia, e.g. ‘the Name is our soul’ (Sutton 1998: 186), I suggest that names could be seen in an analogous way to the way in which Strathern
approaches the body decorations. A name is not only an external attribute, but it also associates with the inner self. Extending Strathern’s argument, I would apply this relationship between body and self to the relationship between national bodies and national selves. The name therefore not only constitutes the image of the national body, but it actually defines its content, the substance of the national self. As with the body decorations in Mount Hagen, displaying the name demonstrates the strength, the power and certain qualities of the group which conveys this name, and it submerges the individual in group identity. Names are evocative. ‘They make habitable or believable the place that they clothe with a word; they recall or suggest phantoms that still move about’ (De Certeau 1986: 105). Hellas for example stands for certain qualities, and by using the name ‘Hellas’ these qualities are evoked. This is why a distortion of a name seems to be equated with the distortion of what this represents. By insisting on the use of a name on a global level one essentially seeks to establish these qualities on this global level. The skin, Strathern says, ‘is the point of contact between the person and the world’. So, I would argue, is the name. It is evident that in the situations described above, ‘name’ is considered as not simply a referential marker. It is a representation; it constitutes an identity. De Certeau (1986: 94), discussing the meaning that names attribute to space, argues that ‘a proper name provides a way of conceiving and constructing space on the basis of a finite number of stable, isolatable and interconnected properties’. The Greek journalist in one of the above cited texts wonders: ‘So will we be Hellenes or Greki in our international appearance?’ That is, will we represent the qualities of the global and diachronic Hellas or those of a temporally specific Greece, constrained by borders? Herzfeld says (1982b: 289) that ‘naming is an associative act: it projects a hoped-for similarity as though it were virtual sameness’. Naming contemporary Greece after Hellas means also attributing to it the laurels the latter has acquired. Names then, as Sutton has shown, ascertain continuity between past and present. As a Greek teacher of the diaspora said, referring to a list with the names of all Greeks who lived in his village in Russia since it was first established, ‘A person dies, not when his heart stops beating, but when he is forgotten. That is why we never forget anyone’ (Ta Néa 13/5/97). ‘Names’, de Certeau says (1986: 104), ‘carve out meanings’ and ‘create a nowhere in places’. Naming Greece after the ancient name ‘Hellas’ is stating that the same Hellas as the one of the ancient times is here in the same place, still alive. It also
gives ancient Hellas a place in the contemporary world. It renders Greece the rightful home for the de-territorialised Hellenism.

IV.F. WRITING HISTORY

In chapter III, discussing the significance of history as property, I argued that writing history is another way of drawing one’s territory. In this section I will elaborate more on how writing history is a means to re-territorialise Hellenism.

In the previous section we saw how names evoke moments in history. In fact, names *embody* history and they recall it every time they are pronounced. Both names and history objectify and establish ‘truths’. As Foucault has argued, ‘truth is not outside power or lacking power’ (1984: 72). One of the mechanisms which define the ‘regime of truth’ in a society is ‘scientific discourse and the institutions which produce it’ (1984: 73). In that respect history, being a discipline, justifies and legitimises academically a certain reality. Thus writing history is another way of being in control, another way of exercising power. The protests against the ‘falsification of history’ FYROM was accused of were accompanied by posters all over Greece saying: ‘Macedonia is Greek. Always has been, always will be. Study history!’ (Sutton 1997: 427). Antiquities and archaeology in general are the means providing evidence for history’s suggested ‘truths’: Mihail Sakellarú, Professor of History, member of the Academy and ex-Director of the National Research Foundation, said on the occasion of the ASA meeting mentioned earlier:

>[...] when an exhibit goes abroad it does not bear its Greek identity. Anyone can call it Bulgarian or pseudo-Macedonian, one can even call it Lapp if one argues that Lapland was inhabited by Macedonians! *This means that if this exhibition is not accompanied by the [archaeological] discipline’s affirmation that Macedonians were Greeks, the effort is wasted.* (62-63) (emphasis added)

The prospect of the publication of a book under the title *Europe: A History of its peoples* in April/May 1990 provoked a big reaction in Greece (cf. Kitromilides 1995: 1). Its editor, Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, had excluded Greece from the history of Europe. Given that the book was expected to be partially sponsored by the EU, the issue was highly political. One of the first reactions came from a member of the Academy of Athens, the diplomat and historian Ángelos Vláhos, who argued:

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There are several people who deny that Europe means Greece and Christianity, that Europe means Christian morality and Greek education \textit{(Ellinikí pedía)}, in which Roman legal education is included \cite{...} Certain circles of the West, in an anachronistic way bypassing Baroque, Renaissance, Enlightenment and the French Revolution, maintain very vividly the memory of Medieval Europe which is dominated by the Pope’s authority. They continue to believe, even today, that they are the real Europe and all the rest is simple outgrowth. \cite{...} The fact that the [European] Commission supported with its authority and finances such a book, which falsifies European history, is surprising. Its responsibilities are heavy, because history is not simply a reading, but the core of the European education, and the whole issue should be treated with the necessary seriousness. \cite{...}[The historians who wrote that book] are those who have the heaviest responsibilities. How did they dare? Haven’t these people walked in the streets of Florence, of Paris, of Britain, of all Western Europe, didn’t they see the Greek presence? \cite{...}Exactly because [these historians] are not the only ones who ignore [the Greek presence], we must be alert and not rely on our past’s laurels’ (\textit{Eleftherotípia} 30/4/90).

Mários Plorítis, another intellectual, who has a permanent column in the newspaper \textit{To Vima}, quoted ancient and modern intellectuals, from Cicero and Horace to Goethe and Shelley, who have praised the importance of the Greek civilisation, and he questioned the intentions of both Duroselle and the European Commission. He discussed the general position of Greece in the European Community and argued that (\textit{To Vima} 29/4/90):

\begin{quote}
contemporary Greece has become a negligible quantity, a problematic fellow-traveller, to the extent that is not only ignored as present, but some cunning ones take advantage of it and delete it also as a great, unique, and unquestionable Historic Past.
\end{quote}

He then pointed to the responsibilities of the Greeks who, he believed, are not efficient and who normally follow a compromising and a slavish mentality. He brought up the unequal treatment of Greece and Turkey by the West and claimed that Turkey would never have been treated the same way if it were a member of the EU.

If time is conceived spatially, and if history is associated with territory (see Chapter III), it should not be surprising that not including Greece in the history of Europe was perceived also as a territorial matter. It was, as some complained, ‘excluding Greece from the European map’. In fact, as the following examples illustrate, maps and history are linked together in nation-states’ efforts to establish themselves in the international arena.
Another case of ‘history’s distortion’, was manifested by the French newspaper *Le Monde*. The newspaper published a ‘special issue’ (March 1994) dedicated to WWII. In the historical maps, which accompanied the texts entitled ‘The War in the Balkans’, there was the following caption: ‘Italian Attack on Greece (October-November 1940) which was driven back by the British’. On the map, which covered the area of the Greek-Albanian border, the positions of the Italians (in Albania) and of the ‘British’ (in Greece) were depicted, while the Greek army was totally absent. A journalist reporting on this event wondered ‘what does this [...] rewriting of history aim at?’ (emphasis added) (*Rizospásis* 30/3/94).

The map plays a role similar to that of names or history. It constructs, declares, and establishes a ‘truth’ visually, acoustically, and in script. It also establishes officially a historical truth in territorial terms. Anderson has pointed out the power of the map in the age of nationalism as one of the means used to shape the way in which the colonial state imagined its dominion (1991: 163-164). However, power is not only negative, but it can also be enabling. It is not centered, but it circulates (Foucault 1980: 119). Names, maps, and history can be poles of contest because they are forms of power. They are devices, not centered in a particular domain (e.g. ‘the West’) or nation-state, but they circulate throughout the network of national societies, and they are used by those who want to exclude as much as by those who want to be included.

**IV.G. CONCLUSIONS**

In this chapter I have introduced some of the ways in which the Greeks deal with the paradox of Hellenism being both ‘local’ and ‘global’. By following an at first sight equally paradoxical tactic, they ‘export’ their heritage on the one hand, thus reinforcing its global character, while at the same time they claim it back on the grounds that it is local. On reflection this tactic is not so paradoxical, because global Hellenism does not substitute or even contradict local Hellenism. On the contrary, global Hellenism is used to reinforce local Hellenism. Local Hellenism actively uses the rhetoric developed about Hellenism’s ‘global’ features in order to create its space and, in some cases, to resist what it considers as global.
Antiquities, like names in the cases discussed here, do not simply constitute images of Hellenism, images of Greek identity. The detachment of the Parthenon marbles from the Acropolis by Elgin was considered as 'a plundering of the Greek soul' (I leilastía tis psihís mas) (Eléftheros Típos 3/4/94), in the same way that during the Macedonian conflicts Greeks claimed that 'name is our soul' (Sutton 1998: 186). Thus antiquities become mobile manifestations of Greek identity internationally, able to circulate beyond the borders of the Greek state. In their materiality, antiquities evoke the entire process of their biographies: their production in ancient Greece, their detachment from the Greek land and their appropriation by foreign hands. Their return to Greece is seen as the closing of a cycle, which will generate for Greece the reputation and the value that antiquities acquired throughout their 'outward movement' (cf. Munn 1977).

'Exporting' Hellenism is therefore a way of eventually getting it back in the form of reputation, which has been produced while Hellenism was in the hands of others. When the Greeks ask for their heritage's repatriation they want to make sure that this cycle is completed, that the reputation, and more generally, the power embodied in antiquities, will eventually come back to where they originated.

Claims both over names and over antiquities are a way of writing history, of establishing certain 'truths': the 'truths' of Greece being Hellas, of the marbles belonging to the Parthenon rather than to Elgin, of Macedonia being part of Greece and not FYROM. Such claims over history are means for Greece to write its history as it sees it and to draw its territory in the map of the world.
CHAPTER V. CONSUMING INALIENABLE WEALTH

I had two excellent statues, a woman and a prince, both solid – their veins showed, that’s how perfect they were. When Poros was destroyed, some soldiers took them and were ready to sell them to some Europeans at Arta: they wanted 1000 tálara [monetary unit]. I ended up there, I happened to be passing by; I grabbed the soldiers, I spoke to them. ‘Even if they give you 10,000 tálara for these, don’t stoop to letting them out of your patrida [fatherland]; these are what we fought for (I take out and give them 350 tálara); and when I see the governor (since we eat together), I’ll give them to him and he’ll give you whatever you ask for to keep them up there in the patrida’. And I hid them. Then through my reference I offered them to the king to make them of use to the patrida (Makriyánnis 1833 (General, during the War of Independence) cited in Leontis 1995: 58-59).

In the previous chapter I discussed the relationship between the local and global meanings of Hellenism and gave some examples of how the idea of Hellenism is exported and re-imported back to Greece, how it is put into international circulation, while at the same time it is bound within the Greek borders. In this chapter I intend to examine further an aspect of this local-global relationship, namely the Greek response to the global commodification of Greek heritage.

Weiner (1985; 1992; 1994) has introduced a new way of approaching the issue of exchange systems by examining the ways in which objects acquire a value that keeps them un-tradable, out of circulation. Such objects, Weiner argues, constitute inalienable wealth and are inherited within the same family or descent group. These objects are more than economic resources. Their inalienability derives from their ability to concentrate multiple cultural meanings and values and their power ‘to define who one is in a historical sense’ (1985: 210). Keeping an inalienable object, according to Weiner, makes the past a ‘powerful resource for the present and the future’ expressing not only a person’s or group’s identity, but concentrating this identity into a symbol of immortality (1985: 224). In the previous chapters, we saw the reaction with which the governmental decision of sending antiquities abroad was met. Although there were some who agreed with the governmental undertaking, believing that ‘the world’ should have a share in Greek heritage, others considered Greek antiquities national treasures, ‘inalienable wealth’, which could not be given away or loaned to anyone. The campaigns for the return of the Parthenon marbles and for the
hosting of the Olympic Games are other examples revealing the extent to which classical antiquity is considered irreplaceable, nationally indispensable and non-transferable wealth.

Figure 29: Cartoon criticising the 1924 suggestion that the statue of Hermes should travel on show in order to raise money for the repayment of the refugee loan (source: Kathimerini 4/7/99).

Even stronger reactions have been voiced in relation to thoughts of selling antiquities. Classical antiquities have been declared ‘national heritage’ and ‘state property’ since the first archaeological law in the early years of the Greek state (1834), and in Greek people’s minds they are not tradable. As we have shown elsewhere (Hamilakis and Yalouri 1996), there are many examples in Greek history when suggestions of selling antiquities were met with indignation. For example, after WWII the sale of some antiquities was suggested for the economic relief from the difficult situation created by the War. The suggestion fuelled public uproar, and finally the plan was abandoned (Petrákos 1982: 30-35). Proposals to display Greek antiquities abroad in exchange for commercial benefits have always met strong opposition from both archaeologists and the wider public. In 1924 it was suggested by Americans that the statue of Hermes made by Praxiteles should travel on show around American and European cities in order to collect money for the repayment of the ‘Refugee Loan’ of the Greek state.
Again, strong feelings resulted in the cancellation of the plan (Petrákos 1982: 80-81; EDAE 4 [1989]: 24). A similar hostile reaction followed the proposal of the Greek ambassador to the USA to display Hermes at the International Commercial Exhibition of New York in 1963 (Petrákos 1982: 81-84). Protests, however, did not always prevent the exportation of antiquities. In 1970 uproar against the export of a female statue from the Acropolis was not successful and the statue was finally displayed at the commercial exhibition EXPO '70 in Osaka, Japan (Petrákos 1982: 85).

As Parry and Bloch (1989: 6) note, it is often argued that 'the impersonality and anonymity of money lends itself to the impersonal and inconsequential relationships characteristic of the market-place and even to a complete anonymity in exchange [...]. Anonymous and impersonal, money measures everything with the same yardstick and thereby – it is reasoned – reduces differences of quality to those of quantity'. In the case of Greek heritage, however, it is not only monetary transactions that are avoided if they involve antiquities, but any kind of open exchange. In the discussion of the ASA concerning the exhibition ‘The Greek Miracle’ discussed in the previous two chapters, the main argument against the governmental undertaking was that antiquities were national treasures, which could not be exchanged or loaned to anyone. Antiquities, as many said, should be above any material profits, and any kind of trade-off would be against the values they represent. Ángelos Vláhos (see also p. 107), a member of the Academy, historian, ex-diplomat and ambassador, said (O Mendor 1992 (20): 64):

Those who signed the request for the calling of this special meeting report three points. The first one is that the antiquities will be exposed to danger. I totally agree... I believe that this is the only reason which should be promoted by the archaeologists. Because the second reason, that the compensatory advantages are not enough, is a position very difficult for me to accept. We either have the perception that the [ancient] Greek works are unique or we do not. If we do, then there is no currency. Greece radiates without asking for radiance. Gentlemen, apart from Egypt with its treasures, Italy, France and maybe England because of its museums, which other countries could in return offer an equivalent which would not be poles apart

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29 A loan provided by the League of Nations for the needs of the refugees who fled to Greece as a result of the exchange of Greek and Turkish populations after the Greek-Turkish confrontation in Asia Minor (1920-1922).

30 Let us not forget that in 1970 the military dictatorship ruled, and thus it was not a very favourable time for any kind of protest.
from ours. I, therefore, think that we trivialise our [antiquities] if we ask something in return and we come to some kind of exchange, some kind of trade.

Vláhos touches the heart of the issue: for the Greeks, antiquities should not be exchangeable goods. Their exchangeability would mean their replaceability, negating their uniqueness. If exchange is based on reciprocity, asking for some works from abroad to exchange would be engaging Greek antiquities in an economic logic and thus admitting that there is a price for them as well.

Even though Greek antiquities cannot be considered ‘saleable’, this does not prevent them from being capitalised on, even for economic profit. However, such transactions are veiled. An example is a campaign during WWII, which called for financial assistance for Greece. In the campaign poster (Figure 30) the Acropolis is depicted between a 4th century BC statue of Hermes and a contemporary Greek woman with her child. The Acropolis is thus shown to link symbolically the classical Greek past with the Greek present. On the top of the poster the imperative ‘Help Greece now!’ reminds the Western world in bold capital letters of the ‘responsibility’ it has towards the ‘cradle of civilisation’. The economic transaction attempted here takes a different
form than that of selling and buying. It is 'euphemized' (Bourdieu 1977: 191).
Bourdieu, in his discussion of 'symbolic violence', says that a way of 'getting and
keeping a lasting hold over someone' is through gifts or debts which create 'moral',
'affective' obligations (ibid). In fact, a belief held by both Greek official bodies and
ordinary people since the establishment of the Greek state (Skopetá 1988: 211)
considers Greek heritage as a gift to the world, which should therefore be indebted to
the country that gave birth to it. This conviction allows the exchange of Greek
heritage without attributing to it a commodity's connotations. By reminding the
Western world of its valuable gift, Greece takes the right to ask for financial help
without turning its heritage into a saleable item.

It has been noted (Parry and Bloch 1989: 9) that 'while those who write in the
Marxian tradition stress the mystification which accompanies commodity exchange,
they tend by antithesis to treat the world of gift exchange as non-exploitative,
innocent and even transparent'. By contrast Parry and Bloch argue that non-
commodity exchanges are not politically innocent and that in some cases 'it is not
commodity exchange which is ideologically problematic but rather the exchange of
gifts'.

No funding apart from that by UNESCO has been accepted for the restoration works
on the Acropolis. Some monies are considered more polluting than others. According
to the words of an éforos of the Acropolis:

Any kind of funding for the Acropolis, apart from UNESCO, has been
denied. It should be supported only through national funds. If we cannot
support at least the Acropolis by our own funds, then, what the hell! What
will we make out of the Acropolis? Acropolis Renault, Heineken etc.?

If the Acropolis is considered to be a gift to the world, then it should not be surprising
that the only money considered acceptable is that which comes as a sign of gratitude
and responsibility of the world towards the monument. UNESCO, as an international
organisation working for the sake of 'civilisation', obviously meets these criteria. By
contrast, the money of Renault or Heineken would only serve the advertising ends of
these companies and would therefore transform the monument into another product,
which could be bought and sold according to commercial interests. Although in
practice the economic transaction does take place, for the éforos quoted above it is the
intention and the spirit in which the money is given and accepted that defines the character of and legitimises the exchange.

Figure 31: Advertisements using the Acropolis.

Although much effort has been made towards keeping classical antiquity out of a strictly economic transaction process, it has not managed to escape commodification through its increasing use in advertising. Commercial advertising of consumer goods using symbols of the classical heritage has taken place in Greece since the beginning of the 20th century, the first pioneering phase of industrial development in Athens. Large-scale advertising, however, appeared in Greece after WWII, and since then images extracted from ancient works of art have played an increasing role in commercial advertising (Figure 31). This trend is obviously also due to the general public having become increasingly aware of ancient culture through mass tourism and exhibitions (Papageorgiou-Venetas 1994: 391). Although the commodification of antiquities is most often met with criticism, it is accepted as a necessary evil, in step with our times. It is also tolerated to the extent that it allows the circulation of the Acropolis’ reputation without moving it away from its ‘home’. There have been occasions, however, when commodification has provoked uproar and it has generated long discussions concerning the limits of the commercial use of antiquities. I will
discuss three examples, which will illuminate further the co-existence of the alienable and inalienable properties of Greek heritage.

V.A. COCA-COLA VERSUS THE ACROPOLIS: THE CLASH OF THE TITANS

In 1970, the Greek Nobel laureate George Seféris narrated his ‘nightmare on the Acropolis’ in an essay on Artemidoros Daldianos (Seféris 1970, cited in Leontis 1995). In Seféris’ nightmare the Acropolis was auctioned to an American toothpaste company which would give the Parthenon Doric columns the shape of toothpaste tubes. Seféris wrote this essay during the colonels’ dictatorship in Greece, a time when the spirit of tourism and Americanism was at its peak.

Figure 32: Part of a newspaper article contrasting the outrage provoked by the Coca-Cola advertisement with the indifference that Greeks showed for the cover design of an issue of ‘Spectator’, showing the Parthenon as a concentration camp (source: To Vima 30/8/92).
Twenty years later a version of Seféris' nightmare was to come true. In 1992 an advertisement caused an outcry and generated much discussion in the Greek press. The advertisement was produced by Coca-Cola and showed Coca-Cola bottles replacing the columns of the Parthenon (Figure 32). As some pointed out, many Greek companies had repeatedly used the Parthenon and other 'national' symbols in advertisements (see Bulótis 1988), a fact that made that reaction unjustifiable. A text in a left-wing magazine writes (Andi 591 (1992): 45):

[...] While the nightmare of the Acropolis consisting of casts seems to be coming true, the Greek intellectuals – with the support of most of the media, which are after the ephemeral news – keep complete silence. Only one truly outrageous slogan by the multi-national Coca-Cola company was enough to awaken the entire political and intellectual world and to cause unanimous condemnation of the barbarians in an effusion of nationalist fever. They overlook, deliberately or not, the fact that a Greek company was the first one to 'throw' the Acropolis' monuments into mass consumption by using the Caryatids in a sandals-advertisement. But in this case there were no reactions following the modern Greek [assumption] 'they are ours, we do anything we want with them'. The ex-minister Melina Merkúri was a pioneer in the wider outcry by placing the usurpation of the monument on the same scale with the undertaking of the Olympic Games party by Atlanta.31

However, what was widely felt was that the symbol of the Acropolis had been internationally humiliated. I quote some of the reactions of students from the 6th PR and the 5th GR respectively, when I showed them the advertisement:

6th PR:

_ Yalouri: What do you think of this advertisement? _

_Maria_: On the one hand, the fact that foreign peoples put the Parthenon in the advertisement shows that they too consider it as something important, but on the other…

_Vassílis_: It shows that Coca-Cola conquered Greece even more!

_Ánna_: I didn’t like it, because they are ridiculing the Parthenon, they present it as if it was something very simple.

_Yalouri_: But we, too, _use the Parthenon everywhere: if you walk around Pláka you will see 'Hotel Acropolis', 'souvlaki the Parthenon', etc._

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31 In fact, the inconsistency of the Greek reactions was brought up several times, e.g. in another issue of the same magazine (Andi 610 1996: 44) referring to the fact that in the new Greek committee for the ‘claiming’ of the Olympic Games 2004, the participation of the representative of Coca-Cola in Greece was welcomed. The writer comments: ‘Anti-cocacolism is over; long live the glorious coca-colaphilia’. 118
Éva: Souvlaki [food?] is sacred too!

Andónis: Coca-Cola and Atlanta stole the Olympic Games from us!

5th GR:

Manólis: I don’t like it. It is ridiculous, it is degrading to the Acropolis.

Yalouri: But when we see a sewer maintenance company called ‘the Parthenon’ or souvlaki ‘the Acropolis’, isn’t that degrading?

Manólis: It is.

Yalouri: Then why was it this particular photo that provoked protests and not the others?

Spiros: Probably because the company is universally known and it degraded us universally.

Kóstas: I don’t agree with that advertisement, because what would they think if we had depicted the Statue of Liberty holding a feta cheese?

The above dialogue raises several issues concerning the ‘keeping-while-giving’ of the Greek heritage and the dilemmas accompanying it: Maria is happy that the company chose a Greek symbol for its advertisement: it shows that the Parthenon is still a meaningful symbol internationally and proves that even the economic giant Coca-Cola considers it powerful enough to benefit from it. On the other hand, the same student feels uncomfortable with the act of using the Parthenon as an advertising logo. According to Ánna (6th PR), Manólis and Spiros (5th GR) it is degrading for the Acropolis to lend its name and its form to commodities. Coca-Cola as an international company manifests the Acropolis’ commodification universally while, as we said, it has to be distant from economic connotations. Vassilis and Andónis (6th PR) also see in this advertisement the threat of American hegemony, which ‘robbed’ Greece of the Olympic Games and then of its other prominent symbolic capital, the Acropolis.

Another issue raised, but not only by the students, is the distortion of the form of the Acropolis by Coca-Cola. For many it was unacceptable that what was put into worldwide circulation was not the Greek Acropolis and the ideals that it represents, but a distorted one which displaced the original. Sifis, the Cretan left-wing activist (see also p. 82) asserted:
It is absurd and unacceptable. And don’t tell me what Yiorgos [a mutual friend] told me, i.e. that since the Greeks, the Greek society, the Greek state treats the antiquities with disregard, why should we be disturbed when the foreigners do it. Both are wrong. You can’t treat a monument as a means of advertising. There are certain limits in advertising. My personal opinion is that there should be no advertising. Advertising creates passive consumers and, following this logic, it does not have any qualms or limits. As far as I know the use of a monument to such an extent and in such a way has never occurred before. OK, you see ‘dolmas Aristotle’, or ‘feta cheese the Parthenon’. Surely this is ridiculous. But in the case of feta cheese, you have at least the photo of the Parthenon – they have not put pieces of cheese on the column.

Aléxandros, an archaeologist in his late 50s (see also p. 171), also brought up the ‘difference between an advertisement which takes the Parthenon as a whole and an advertisement that deforms it’. Drawing his argument further, and while we were going through some VIP photos taken on the Acropolis, he commented that ‘all these are inevitable photos, taken by journalists because these people are VIPs or in memory of the moment’. However, he found ‘provocative and disturbing’ photos, such as one of the American actress Jane Mansfield posing in front of the Parthenon (Figure 33), because he believed that she used the Parthenon as the background of her portrait. ‘She is the background, not the Parthenon’ he exclaimed, disturbed.

The Coca-Cola advertisement did the same thing, namely it placed the Parthenon to the background and brought Coca-Cola to the fore. Coca-Cola became the main
subject, while the Parthenon served as a trick to promote it. Malcolm Quinn (1994), in his discussion of the swastika, has introduced the theory of the ‘meta-symbol’ to describe the way a symbol can represent not a specific referent, but the ‘symbolic realm or the symbolic process per se’, becoming thus a ‘sign of non-signability’, a ‘symbol of symbols, set apart from all others and representable only by itself’.

Drawing on Quinn’s theory of meta-symbol, Daniel Miller (1998) uses the same term to describe Coca-Cola. Thus, he argues, ‘Coca-Cola’ does not simply represent the dark sweet American drink. On the contrary, it is a much more generalised and ‘dense’ sign concentrating multiple discussions and evoking associations, which relate to the nature of commodities in general. Similarly, the Acropolis is more than a set of ancient ruins on the hill dominating the city of Athens. The term ‘Acropolis’ can be filled with any feelings, ideas, ideals or values relating to the idea of ‘civilisation’ as praised by classicism. Under this perspective, the case of the Coca-Cola advertisement can be seen as a clash between two meta-symbols. The meta-symbol of Coca-Cola appropriates the title of ‘civilisation’ offering a new interpretation of it.

This would mean that civilisation is not derived from the spirit of Hellenism, but from commodification, materialism and Americanisation. The Parthenon thus fades away and gives its place to Coca-Cola. It is transformed, and its Doric columns, product of ‘the measure and harmony’ of the golden Classical era, become mass-produced Coca-Cola bottles. An archaeologist who participated in a conference in Paris on the occasion of the centennial of the revival of the Olympic Games, shook his head with grief, while quoting to me the words by the head of public relations of Coca-Cola, ‘démocratisation is commercialisation’. Democracy, the well-known child of the Hellenic spirit, had finally been put into the service of money and advertising, it had become a commodity.

In the case of the Coca-Cola advertisement the authority and the power of the unique, original, and authentic Acropolis was at stake because of the polluting connotations of a non-Greek, mass-produced product. The Acropolis is a cultural product not only of the 5th century BC, but of millennia, as it has been reproduced through use/abuse. In this continuous reproduction, its appropriation through visual representations has been crucial. The unique work of art has been substituted by multiple copies, part of today’s mass culture. This means that the Acropolis has become more accessible both literally and metaphorically: not only can it be made known to anybody, but it can
also be appropriated by several people and on many levels. But does this mean that the mass-reproduction of classical antiquity in general and the Acropolis in particular has affected the aura of these national Greek symbols, as Walter Benjamin has suggested in relation to art in the era of mechanical reproduction (1992 [1955])?

Greek heritage, Greeks say, belongs 'in' the world. As I argued in the previous chapter, the global character of Greek heritage is not denied as long as it does not undermine the local. Greek heritage belongs in the world, but to Greece. In other words, it is alienable in the sense that it circulates around the world and its image is exchanged on several levels, but at the same time it has to remain inalienable, a valuable treasure of the Greek nation. Its mechanical reproduction does not deprive it of its aura for the Greeks. On the contrary, its circulation around the world can be an asset: it makes it known all over the world and increases its popularity. In that respect, it is not the Acropolis that loses its aura and its authority; it is Greece that may lose the power to control it. What needs to be distant becomes closer. The Greek Acropolis situated in Greece is challenged by the global de-territorialised Acropolis, which moves around the world through its reproductions. Later (p. 132), I will quote a journalist blaming the 'era of virtual reality' which creates artificial settings. Virtual reality encourages the creation of imaginary places by using elements from reality. In this respect, it could constitute a danger for a work of art like the Acropolis. It threatens to dismember it and to use it in pieces rather than as a whole. It uses it as a décor, a simple setting, where the action is undertaken by other protagonists.

Lash and Urry (1994: 13-15), discussing the mobility that characterises the postmodern world, have argued that the increased circulation of objects progressively empties their material content, increases their sign value and transforms them into images. Lash and Urry believe that through this process objects are also emptied of meaning. De-territorialisation is for them equated with emptying out. Abstractedness, however, does not necessarily imply emptying. On the contrary, de-territorialisation makes objects more elastic and absorptive, and it allows them to be filled up with more than one meaning. The more the Acropolis travels around the more its local Greek meaning becomes relative and easily displaced by others.

Traditionally part of the canon of Western European upper class 'high art' and a marker distinguishing the taste of the 'court' from popular taste, ancient classical art
passed eventually into the hands of the bourgeoisie, became commodified and mechanically reproduced, communicated and accessible to a mass audience. Factors such as long distance, costs and difficult access, which used to make the acquisition of these prestige-generating objects a marker of distinction, were eliminated when their mass-reproduction became possible. Thus other ways had to be invented in order to preserve their uniqueness and exclusivity. One of the ways in which the upper classes tried to retain the exclusivity of this ‘cultural capital’ was through developing the discourse of authenticity and originality. In a similar way the discourse of authenticity has also been adopted by the Greeks in order to protect the singularity of their national heritage against mass-production and to keep its uniqueness in relation to other nation-states. In the meeting of the ASA discussed earlier, many suggested sending copies instead of the original works of art to the exhibition in New York (e.g. O Mendor: 23). I quote the words by Vassílios Petrákos, the General Secretary of the ASA:

...I remind you that antiquities are absolute values; they are not movies in many copies. It is as if we had Thucydides or Homer in a unique unpublished manuscript. I believe that this is how we look at Poseidon, Hegeso and Dexileos. Unless there are archaeologists or art lovers for whom the antiquities’ photos are enough; I hope not for the Greeks.32 (ibid: 28)

In the same spirit a professor of classical archaeology in the ASA meeting dreads what will happen if the antiquities are damaged during their transportation to or from the exhibition in New York (ibid: 53): ‘If something happens, God forbid, what will we put in its place in the Acropolis museum? Its replica or its photo?’

According to the two speakers above, a replica may represent the ancestral heritage of the Greeks, but only the authentic artifact embodies it. Antiquities appear as vehicles of invested emotion, and the Greeks, for whom antiquities represent their ancestral heritage, should be especially sensitised to their authenticity. Thus, while the mass-reproduced copies of antiquities are intended for global consumption, the original ones remain the inalienable wealth of the local. As such, they cannot be appropriated by any non-Greek organisation. Thus, claims to ancient Greek heritage by non-Greek

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32 The speaker here refers to Poseidon, the 5th cent. BC bronze statue (National Museum of Greece), to the 5th cent. BC grave stele featuring Hegeso (National Museum of Greece), and to the 4th cent. BC grave stele featuring Dexileos (Museum of Kerameikos).
agents can only ignite the reaction of the Greeks and eventually take the form of extended conflict between the two. The question of hosting the 1996 Olympic Games can serve as an indicative case study for exploring these politics further.

V.B. THE OLYMPICS IN ATLANTA – HOW THE GOLDEN OLYMPIAD TURNED INTO PLASTIC

On September 4th 1997, members of the ‘Citizens’ Initiative Against the Olympic Games 2004’ organised a protest demonstration on the Acropolis. They tried to hoist a banner saying ‘No to the 2004 Olympic Games, no to the commercialisation of the ancient spirit’ (Kathimerini 5/8/97). It was a reaction following the fears of the negative results that the staging of the Olympic Games in Athens might have for the city. The Greek intellectual Hristos Yiannaras (see also p. 77), referring to Seféris’ nightmare mentioned earlier (p. 117) argued that:

If Greece accepted and tolerated on its soil the monstrous Olympiads’ adulteration of today, it would amount to the allotment of the Parthenon for the conversion of its columns to toothpaste tubes for the advertisement of a multi-national product (Kathimerini 17/8/97).

For Yiannaras, Greece’s hosting of the Olympic Games in the ‘distorted’ (commodified) form that it has acquired while in foreign hands would amount to Greece’s blessing of the adulteration of the Olympic spirit. It would be equal to selling off the Acropolis to an American company.
It is important to see how the two sides of the contest over the Olympic Games were presented in Greece. On the one hand was Greece, the land that ‘gave birth’ to the Olympic Games and thus its ‘legitimate owner’, and on the other the USA, powerful but ‘foreign’ to the spirit of the Games. Through such a juxtaposition, comparisons between the USA and Greece, Athens and Atlanta, North American culture and Greek culture were sought.

The general discourse that accompanied discussions about the hosting of the Olympic Games revolved around the idea that the Olympics have become prey to the law of the powerful, a field of advertising and of rivalries between superpowers. Whole pages in newspapers were dedicated to describing the means by which Atlanta succeeded in becoming the host and to outlining the profile of those involved (Figure 34). Economic giants like Coca-Cola or CNN, which both have Atlanta as their home base, were contrasted to the comparatively powerless position of Greece. Nikitas Gavalás, a journalist reports in *Kathimerini*: (14/7/96)

[...]The only superpower left in the world is the one that deprived Greece from the rightful organisation of the Games on the occasion of the

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33 Long before the appearance of the Coca-Cola advertisement and the candidacy of Atlanta as a host of the Olympic Games, Greek cartoonists used images of the classical past as a means to comment on what they considered to be ‘American hegemony’ (Figure 35).
centennial since its revival. It is the one which keeps for itself the exclusive right to undertake the Olympic Games every time it thinks that this is in accord with its interests, thus applying a very singular, anti-democratic order in the bosom of the International Olympic Committee. What kind of service to the Olympic Games’ spirit can one talk about, when before and during the Games the basic aim is the advertising of power and of wealth as well as the obtaining of all kinds of profit by the renowned multi-national companies of the state of Georgia? Only four years before the year 2000, we will become witnesses to the adulteration of the nature of the oldest institution, which has now become giantised and commodified.

Dimítris Kaprános, another journalist (Kathimerini 4/8/96) describes his experience of ‘the multi-national companies’ feast’ and laments the ‘degradation of the Olympic spirit, which has been transformed into a plastic Coca-Cola glass or sold as a ‘memorabilium sticker’ (Figure 36):

While Cassius Clay or Mohamed Ali was lighting up the torch in the Olympic stadium of Atlanta, a blond American with a ponytail and a handlebar moustache was crying his wares. ‘Cold Bud[weiser], quench your thirst’. In the next seat, a well-fed lady was enjoying a piece of pizza and was brandishing the plastic cup of Coca-Cola. She was wearing a hat with the sign of Panasonic and a T-shirt with the badge of IBM and on her socks, there appeared the initials of another company.
The journalist’s words reveal a belief shared by many Greeks that Greek heritage in foreign hands can not but be treated as another commodity. In general, a widespread perception in Greece was that the Olympic Games of Atlanta was a kitsch, commercial show and Atlanta itself a hectic city worse than Athens, where everybody either sells or buys, a city linked with racism and counter-democratic values (Figure 37, Figure 38).

Figure 37: Reference to the electric chair still in use in Atlanta, the host city of the Olympic games in 1996. The comment says: ‘The electric chair will remain empty during the Olympic Games. When the cameras go off, however, the executions will resume’ (source: Ta Néa 16/7/96).

Figure 38: Black people displaced under the heavy podium of the white Olympic winners in Atlanta. Comment on the racist features of the city accommodating the Olympic Games of 1996 (source: Kathimerini 21/7/96).

To the size and ethos of the adulterated Olympic Games, the presence of Greece was juxtaposed:
The Greek team, larger than any other time, and perhaps with more hopes for some medals than any other time, will give its own difficult and, in many cases, unequal athletic battle. What is important is that our representatives participate with passion and self-denial, certain that in every appearance of theirs they will be reminding many lovers of the unadulterated Olympianism that they are coming from a country which keeps its traditions alive and which can serve as a shelter of the institution. We put aside our bitterness, we kept the ethics once more, from the delivery of the flame up to the participation (Kathimerini 28/7/96).

Yánnis Melissanídis is another gold medallist of 1996. He became very popular in the Greek press not only for his athletic achievement, but also because of his command of the Greek language and his eloquent expression of patriotic feeling. The following words are his, recollecting the moment of victory:

[...] Maybe the body was mine, Melissanídis’ body, who had to do his duty; Greece, however, was contesting at that moment, thus the medal belongs to Greece [...]  
[...] It is grandiose to enclose Greece inside you. In order to achieve that, I closed my eyes and I felt I acquired a tremendous strength [...]  
[...] I must be perfect for Greece. I was not Melissanídis, I was Greece [...]  

In a journalist’s question as to what he expects from Greece he answered: ‘What would I expect from Greece? The love of everyone and the honour that the Greeks wept [with my victory] is enough for me’. To another question on how he felt when he won, he answered: ‘In a word Greek’. (All are quotes from Kathimerini 4/8/96)  

Not only did Melissanídis feel his body was one with the Greek national body, the Greeks themselves felt that the Olympic medallists were performing as if they were the whole Greece. This is why all those who wept with Melissanídis’ and Vúla Patulídú’s victories felt that they had a share in the honour. The medallists’ victory was also a personal victory for them. The ‘small and, compared to the USA, poor and not as well equipped Greece’ was identified with the promising bodies of those young people who, against all odds, became champions of world fame. The participation in the welcoming ceremony of the medallists in Athens in 1996 was massive, and the national emotion this event provoked in Greece was stunning (Figure 39). Also Greek Macedonia, the place of origin of many of the athletes, an area which has been particularly sensitive to issues of national character during the last years, put on an extremely enthusiastic welcome for them. As a journalist reported (Kathimerini ibid),
referring to Melissanídis: ‘Travelling in the dream, he took us with him and he raised us even higher than the podium, where the Greek soul flies under the sound of the national anthem’.

Figure 39: Front page in the newspaper Ta Néa (7/8/96) dedicated to the return of the Olympic winners from Atlanta to Greece. The title says ‘Hello to you, proud Greeks’.

Figure 40: Cartoon by KYR, after Greece was granted the right to host the Olympic games of 2004. One of the figures on the right says ‘You see, even the néfosa (the pollution-cloud hanging over Athens) participates in the celebrations’ (source: Eleftherotipia 21/9/97).
Although, on an international level, the Greeks promoted their claim to organise the games, they often privately expressed scepticism as to whether they would not make a fool of themselves.

There were many who voiced their objections to the idea of Athens accommodating the Olympic Games. Most of the arguments were that such an undertaking would be a burden on the already weak Greek economy. It would aggravate the existing architectural congestion and environmental pollution of the city (Figure 40), which was not ready to afford such an enterprise technologically and logistically. Finally, some were horrified at the prospect of the Helleno-Christian kitsch demonstrations which might accompany such a venture (e.g. *Andi* 610 (1996): 44).

This fear was related to the recent opening celebrations of the Athletics World Championships held in the summer of 1998 in Athens. These were considered crucial to prove Athens’ capability to hold the Olympic Games in the year 2004 to the Olympic Committee. What became the object of discussion was the construction of an archaic gate at the entrance of the stadium that accommodated the championships in Athens (Figure 41). The gate was constructed out of some artificial material and it had some ancient representations. Apparently, the construction’s aim was to make the whole event look more spectacular on TV. Many were particularly disturbed by the aesthetics of this fake gate, which were compared to those dominant during the two dictatorships in Greece and to fascist constructions by Hitler and Mussolini. Above all, however, the comments that the gate provoked were of the type ‘a product of a globalised taste’; ‘a product of the greed for easy profit’; ‘monstrous and sacrilege’; ‘a Hollywood setting’ adopted by the Greeks themselves. The forthcoming Olympic Games were foreseen to become a game of public relations and personal promotion, a market of athletic ideals, a circus. The paradox of the fake construction trying to ‘retouch’ the authentic stadium was repeatedly stressed. Many Greeks expressed the view that, instead of trying to produce replicas, Greece should rather look after the authentic products of its civilisation. At the same time it was suggested with bitterness that this construction was the gloss which aimed to mask all the things

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34 It must be noted that the stadium is not ancient, although in many people’s minds it is, maybe because it is situated in the place where the ancient one used to be.

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Athenians are ashamed of, foremost among them the sorry state of the city of Athens. Others viewed it as one of the disastrous effects of globalisation:

![Image of the gate, constructed in front of the Kallimármaro stadium on the occasion of the 1998 Athletics World Championships, in Athens (source: To Vima 27/7/97).](image)

**Figure 41: The gate, constructed in front of the Kallimármaro stadium on the occasion of the 1998 Athletics World Championships, in Athens (source: To Vima 27/7/97).**

Antiquities, too, demand respect... rather than putting make-up on them so shamelessly, it would be better to leave them to what time does to them. Time is merciless, but it will still look after them better. It will not violate them. Because what is happening here now, without shame, is something like a libation to the globalised taste. The leveled taste, which is the result of the aesthetics of the restaurant owner in Hong Kong, the care taker in Marseilles, the hair dresser in Sri Lanka, the taxi-driver in LA, the receptionist in Beijing. Aesthetics under the direction of CNN [...] [The organisers of the ceremony] admit with an unanswerable lowness that the way the Kallimármaro stadium looked could not 'sell'. For the foreign TV to be interested, they said, 'magnets' were needed, an 'imagery intervention' was needed (Kathimerini 23/7/97).

The act of adding the artificial gate on the 'authentic' site is perceived here as a violation: it is imposing a foreign body on the site, transgressing its identity. This is a belief reminiscent of the one arguing that form is the mirror of the soul. The fake gate, like the Coca-Cola bottles replacing the columns of the Parthenon, is believed to have the power to transform the ancient spirit and everything that this represents. This idea comes up again in a later issue of Kathimerini (1/8/97), where another journalist laments the departed, real, ancient glory:

Late tonight, when the last spectator leaves the Kallimármaro, the discus thrower will be there, alone, to recollect the years of his real, and not his

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35 *Kallimármaro* is the name after which this stadium is known. Its literal meaning is 'beautifully marbled'.
television, glory. And we, his descendants, with our eyes turned towards the Olympic stadium, we will be enjoying the athletes efforts, trying perhaps to imagine them stripped of the tunics of advertising.36

Many described the gate, as well as the opening ceremony, as a Hollywood setting, reminiscent of movies such as Ben Hur and Hercules, reopening the discussion of the use/abuse of the monuments. Paratiritis writes in Kathimerini (23/7/97):

There is much ado about the use and the abuse of monuments. And while the use or the abuse takes place for the indigenous or for living people, like the performances of ancient tragedies or musical performances, it is fine. Now, however, we have to deal with an international television show. An overproduction of a Hollywood type which will be transmitted to millions of people all over the world […] So can we use monuments as a [performance] setting? […] We live in the era of settings, of virtual reality […]. This is why all those who refer to the revival of the Olympic spirit either consider us stupid or they cannot suggest that they are famous for their intellectual abilities. In simple words they are all… actors.

It becomes obvious that we are coming across a series of oppositions which derive from the comparison between the two cultures, the American and the Greek. On the one hand appears the American, ‘glossy, rich and powerful’ and on the other the Greek, ‘plain and simple’. The American reproduction of the Olympic Games was considered as only hiding its fakeness behind demonstrations of affluence and luxury, while the Greek was thought to possess the authentic already. To the power of the West linked with material growth, Greece responds with the power of the spirit, which creates masterpieces. The spirit becomes the Greek response to the economic wealth of the powerful West, and this is enough to tip the balance of power between the two countries in favour of Greece. Following a strategy similar to that of religion, which promises another level where power can be defeated, the juxtaposition between material riches and the power of ‘spirit’ manages to subvert the normal rules of power. The material riches associated with capitalism and commodification become irrelevant compared to the power of spirit, and poverty is made an asset.

The term pnēvma (spirit) in Greek, apart from religious meanings, can also have intellectual and cultural connotations. Therefore, praising ‘the spirit’ of the Acropolis or the Olympic Games is praising both the intellectual as well as the Greek cultural

36 A statue situated on the opposite of the Kallimármaro stadium in 1927, made by the sculptor Konstandínos Dimitríádis inspired by a classical statue known to us from its Roman copies.
force which gave them form. This spirit, usually coined as *To Ellinikó pnévma* (the Greek spirit), is nothing else but the Greek *Volksgeist*, which carries intellectual, cultural and religious connotations.

The driving force behind the dynamics of ‘keeping while giving’ as described in the beginning of the chapter is, for Weiner (1985), the ‘hau’, the spirit which resides in things and defines their inalienability. Weiner writes (ibid: 223):

> Mauss was correct: ‘The thing given is not inert. It is alive and often personified’ (1954: 10). For *taonga* are to some extent parts of persons in the sense’ that they are the material document of its owner’s past and are themselves the carriers of the hau. The stone and cloth valuables believed to contain the same life force, the hau, as do humans, are not only the agents of individuals, but through their collective histories, the valuables become the proof of a group’s immortality. To lose a taonga forever is a material admission of one’s own mortality and a sign of the weakening of a tribe’s identity and power.

Inalienable wealth for Weiner is a concept not restricted to the ‘taonga’ of the Maori. It can appear in the Western or Eastern world, in the developing or developed societies. The ‘hau’ on the other hand is a quality of objects, such as the Australian Aboriginal tjurunga boards and Maori feather cloaks, as well as the British crown jewels or the Elgin marbles.

In the age of nationalism the romantic *Volksgeist*, the soul of a nation sought in various pieces of material culture, could be seen as a concept similar to that of the hau. Classical Greek heritage, the Parthenon marbles or the Olympic Games are all inalienable wealth and conveyors of the ‘Greek spirit’, defining it in a historical sense. Greek antiquities thus serve as a means for bringing the past into the present and for establishing the status of Greek identity within the international ranking. Getting back the contested Greek heritage is, to use Weiner’s words, ‘attesting to one’s power to hold oneself or one’s group intact. For to give up these objects is to lose one’s claim to the past as a working part of one’s identity in the present’. In the search for national distinction, for national authenticity and for signs representing the very Greek soul, any appropriation of classical Greek antiquities by foreign agents can only be seen as pure distortion of the essence of national treasures.
V.C. FROM THE SALOON TO THE HERODEION: BLUE JEANS AND CLASSICAL HERITAGE

So far I have examined some cases where Greek inalienable wealth has been seen as expatriated and de-territorialised by foreign institutions, like in the examples of the Coca-Cola advertisement and the hosting of the Olympic Games in Atlanta. Contestation of Greek inalienable wealth by the forces of globalisation, however, can be felt even in cases where it has not been literally moved away from the Greek territory. Here, I intend to discuss such a case.

Every summer Athens' festival takes place and fuels discussions as to what cultural events are considered suitable to be staged in ancient theatres. The idea of a festival reviving the ancient Greek theatres originated in the early 1950s and gradually developed into a grand cultural event hosting Greek and non-Greek artists under the auspices of the Greek Tourist Organisation. Herodeion, a theatre of Roman times named after its sponsor Herodes Atticus, lies on the south foot of the Acropolis hill and is the main ancient theatre inside Athens that stages these cultural events.

In the summer of 1998 the company of the American fashion designer Calvin Klein (hereafter CK) requested to present a new jeans series in a show of 'artistic character' involving music and dancing (Figure 42). The receipts from the performance would be donated for the building of the new Acropolis Museum (Kathimerini 18/8/98). The request, like all requests, reached the Central Archaeological Council (hereafter CAC) but was rejected. The issue was forwarded to the Minister of Culture in order to sign off the rejection. Although the minister normally agrees with the CAC, this time he disagreed.
The possibility of a fashion show at the Herodeion fuelled several public and private discussions. Although the Herodeion is a Roman and not a Greek classical theatre, its vicinity to the Acropolis gives it an importance which other Roman sites or antiquities do not enjoy in Greece. This was another example of a non-Greek company attempting to use Greek wealth for its own interests and for economic profit. Many felt that such a performance would be an atrocity against the ideals that the site represents, a sign of the corruption that the bourgeois world brought about (Kathimerini 18/8/98). Others thought that a bad start would be made and all fashion designers would start asking to stage their fashion shows at the Herodeion. The show was meant to mainly concentrate on the new jeans collection of CK. However, as the CK underwear had become very trendy in Greece at that time, soon many started associating the planned show with an underwear fashion performance, shameful and improper for the site of the Herodeion. Others on the other hand, felt that such a reaction was undue and typical of those ‘who suffer from an arterio-sclerotic conservatism and a pompous provincialism’ (Kathimerini 16/8/98). It was argued that such an attitude was indicative of the ‘confusion between culture and tourism which led the festivals in populist choices shutting out the new, the imaginative, the experimental as non-profitable’ (ibid). In fact some remembered that a year earlier the Greeks had allowed the staging of a popular Greek singer in the Herodeion thus
transforming the site into a 'bouzouki place'. Therefore they believed that the fury against the idea of transforming the Herodeion into a catwalk was at least hypocritical (ibid).

If in the case of the Parthenon marbles or the Olympic Games, it was felt that a stolen property had to be restored, in the case of CK it was felt that the Greeks had to protect their cultural dignity against a new intrusion that was about to take place. Only this time it was taking place under the blessing of the Greek state. In the previous section, I discussed the spirit of the nation as embodied in Greek heritage. This same spirit, however, is also felt to reside in sites which are therefore considered as ‘sacred’ (see following chapter). The idea behind staging cultural events in ancient Greek theatres was to revive this spirit, which was served by performances of classical or other recognised forms of art. No matter how spectacular such performances are, they still manage to project the ancient site without overshadowing it, because they are aligned with the ideals that it represents. In contrast, the character of the flashy fashion show of CK was not considered compatible with a site, which requires modesty and respect for the ancient spirit. The show threatened to introduce the reproducible world of commodities into a site which praises the original and the unique, and to transform it into a medium in the hands of another protagonist, namely CK and his products. Fashion shows, it was argued, were not art but advertising of commodities.

It is revealing that even the Greek minister of culture, who argued that fashion is an art form and that ‘fashion is one of the definitive features of aesthetics and of everyday culture (politismos)’, actually backed this decision to disagree with the CAC on the basis that Klein’s proposal was not an ‘ordinary fashion show’, thus implicitly agreeing with the opinion that fashion is not really art. On the contrary, he said, it was ‘a complex spectacle with original choreography, original music and, I imagine, of aesthetic interest, respecting the rules of the site’s use’ (emphasis added). As an answer to those who detested the idea of a product advertising at the Herodeion he argued that:

Most of the times various music, theatrical or dance performances in monuments are directly linked with the projection of artistic products of new record producers, new movies, new theatrical schemes or with the projection of art perceptions or peoples yielding in their turn an important surplus value.
All those who protested against that event had turned to the rhetoric about the sacredness of ancient sites and heritage. They also felt from Greek Orthodoxy that once sites become sacred, they can never be deconsecrated again (see also, p. 154). Now, however, the Greek state itself was attempting to secularise the site of the Herodeion through a ‘degrading performance’. Degrading, not only because of the ‘polluting’ and ‘frivolous’ connotations of the half-naked bodies of fashion shows, but also because of the shows’ tendency to transform everything but the products into a décor, a background for the advertisement of an enterprise with commercial ends. CK represented for many the same forces as Coca-Cola, i.e. the American hegemony and the power of giganticness and commodification, which tend to devour the culturally unique.

Nikos Mouzelis, professor of sociology at the London School of Economics, argued that the use of Herodeion by the Klein company was ‘a loud example of the colonisation of “the artistic” by “the commercial”’, a case in which not simply the economic capital buys cultural capital but a case in which the ultimate aim is to accumulate economic rather than cultural capital. He writes (To Vima 23/8/98):

> When companies, such as Klein, Cartier or Toyota go beyond sponsorship, aiming at the transformation of the artistic advertising into ‘high art’, then the already frail autonomy of cultural space is totally destroyed. Then, from the advertising pornography (in which, by the way Calvin Klein has a spectacular performance) up to the ‘conscription’ of artistic celebrities, the use of television and the mass media, all means lie in the service of the sales promotion. Then, in the bottom line, the world of art and civilisation becomes in practice a huge syncretic mosaic where everything is levelled and where the only common denominator, the only link is the market mechanism.

I would like to end with the words of a Greek historian, Andonis Liakos, who foresees the danger of the ‘gigantic’, eliminating the personal evocations and readings of a monument and levelling its identity (To Vima 23/8/98):

> Monuments are tangible, but everyone sees them and perceives them through our imagination. And this imagination is fed by several sources, among which are of course the national education and its symbolisms, but also the personal experience and the individual readings. […] The new era, the new cultural industry is characterised by the giantised image and the monopolization of the imaginative (fandasiako). A monument, any monument, landscape or event, is a dwarf devoured by the giant-company. Its image becomes an element of another image. It is inscribed in its style.
and acquires its nuances. It enters the imaginative exactly through this style, through this industrially produced image. If Coca-Cola made an advertisement on the Parthenon, its restoration's economic problems would certainly be solved. We would certainly win the public opinion for the return of the marbles. Greek tourism would definitely gain from the gigantic and priceless project. I would not want, however, to think of the Parthenon, or of any other monument inside or outside Greece, as the background of an advertisement, e.g. the rocks of the Far West as the background of Marlborough, the Eskimos as people of Fujitsu and so on. Also, I don't care whether the Herodeion was built by Greeks or Romans, and therefore is a first or second quality monument. There are heavy and light uses of monuments and this has to do with the power of the users to monopolise or not the imaginative. It does not have to do with whether the uses are the traditional ones of high culture or the postmodern ones of mass culture. The question is whether the individual autonomy in the conceptualisation of monuments is threatened. The imaginative is not air. If it has a price in the market, and indeed a high one, this does not mean that we should sell it.

V.D. TOURISM IN GREECE: THE 'DOUBLE-DECKER' AND THE FATE OF THE ACROPOLIS

My intention here is not to undertake an 'anthropology of Greek tourism'. This would need many more pages and extended fieldwork on this issue. I believe, however, that in a discussion concerning the commodification of Greek heritage, tourism should not be overlooked. Moreover, it is a meeting point of the local with the global, a sphere where the local directly experiences the local-global relationship through the immediate and personal contact of the local people with the tourists; a 'contact-zone' and a 'site of identity-making and transculturation' (Clifford 1997).

Mass tourism appeared in Greece after WWII. Konstandínos Karamanlís during his term of office as minister of public works (1950-52, 1954-55), minister of transportation (1953-54) and as prime minister (1955-1963) became engaged in the application of an economic development scheme which also involved infrastructure works for the attraction of more tourism. Despite its economic orientation, in its first years, Greek tourism was conceptualised in a romantic and idealistic way and followed the desire to project Greek cultural capital (Figure 43). The ancient Greek

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37 A Greek tourist guide that I met distinguished the various periods in the history of tourism in Greece by reference to the successive means of mass transport: 'When Boeing appeared, the tourist buses became fifty-seaters. When the aeroplanes became double-deckers the buses became double-deckers too, and mass tourism was already there in all its 'greatness'.
spirit was to be revived and with it the idea of *filoxenia* – ‘the age-old Greek hospitality’. The Greeks undertook the role of the hosts who also had the responsibility to introduce the foreign pilgrims to both past and present Hellenism. The Greek Tourist Organisation (hereafter GTO) was established in this spirit in 1950. As part of the infrastructure, which was created for the materialisation of this project the foundation of the ‘School of Guides’ also took place, which was staffed with the offspring of ‘the best’ (upper-middle class) Athenian families. The ‘educational experience’ of travellers to Greece thus passed into the hands of professionals who were trained for that mission.

In its materialisation, however, this enterprise was not always met with enthusiasm. Many described Karamanlis’ ‘modernising’ period with the darkest colours. For example, two art magazines, *Zygos* and *Epitheórisi Téhnis* repeatedly sounded a note of warning as early as the 1950s. They believed that the development ‘modernisation’ involved knew no bounds and that it had destructive effects on the landscape and archaeological sites (*Zygos* D 1958-9, 43-44: 4; *Epitheórisi Téhnis* KA (1965) 121-126, see also Figure 44). Tourism was seen as of an orgiastic activity through which Greek heritage was humiliated and had become victim to exploitation and self-interests (*Zygos* 1957-8: 14). The GTO itself often became a target of bitter criticism since its inception. The issue of *Zygos* (D (1958-9), 41: 4) levels strong criticism against ‘the servility’ that the GTO displays towards foreign tourists in expense of ancient as well as of modern Greek sites. It accuses the ‘esthetes’ of the GTO, who every now and then compose directives and send them off to the various ministries:
‘The shoeblacks must leave from Amalia Avenue!’ And the very nice toilers for a living, who not only didn’t disturb anybody, indigenous or foreign, but they were also a picturesque note on the city’s life, took their well-shined and spotlessly clean cases and disappeared. A while later, the enterprisers of GTO took it out on the chestnut-sellers, and lately they turned their fire against whom? […] The marble carvers of Alexandra’s Avenue! ‘The marble-workshops must go’, they cry. ‘It is a shame, the foreigners see them’. You see, it is fashionable to weigh and estimate everything according to the ‘tourist’ interest. Is it comfort that the foreigner wants? We build for him gladly a hotel inside the archaeological site of Sounio. Does the foreigner get tired walking up to the Acropolis? Let us put a lift for him. Does the tourist want streets to walk around the antiquities? Let us dig up Castalia and let us open up streets in Delphi.38 How many, however, of the travellers who visit us have the attitude that the GTO wants to impose on us? How many want a lift to get to the Parthenon? How many look for a rock and roll floor after their visit to Sounio? How many are those who will not prefer the grandiose view of Delphi in order not to be deprived of their limousine’s comfort? And how many are those who do not perceive that inside the ‘inelegant’ workshops of the marble carvers, those which the GTO wants so fervently to demolish, resides the flame of a

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38 Castalia is the fountain in Delphi used for the purification of pilgrims before they entered the sanctuary.
national tradition out of which Pheidiases [Pheidies], Halepases [Halepâdes], and the whole of Kerameikos originated. We believe that the foreigners who belong to that category are a negligible quantity. They are the spoiled ones and the uncivil ones. We also think that a foreigner who is cultivated and has taste will be more disturbed by the horrific facades of certain central buildings or from the various kiosks selling 'souvenirs' and which have appeared under the blessing of the GTO, outside every archaeological site, even on the Acropolis, rather than from the humble, invisible workshops of the marble-carvers in Alexandra’s Avenue. But even if this is not the case and if the GTO is right, is it right to expropriate our consciousness, our history, and our traditions for some thousands of dollars? What is then our ideal? To become a people of bell-boys and of valets? Because following such a tactic, having such people governing us, this is where we will inevitably end […].

The fear of exploitation by foreigners and the ‘Greek servility’ which might lead the Greeks to renounce their cultural identity is something that has been preoccupying Greeks until today and has found its expression in statements like that of the ex-minister of culture Melína Merkúri: when she became minister of culture in 1981, and while announcing her intentions to contribute towards Greece’s keeping its cultural uniqueness she declared that ‘the Greeks will not become the waiters of Europe’. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, since its very beginning as a nation-state, Greece has felt a direct foreign interference, both in its political system and life, often conceived as ‘foreign hegemony’. In the text quoted above the general rhetoric about this unbalanced relationship is conceived through the urge the GTO displayed to transform and to adjust the Greek living space to the needs and expectations of foreign visitors.

Until the 1950s tourism in Greece had been mainly ‘cultural’, consisting of ‘travellers’ continuing, in a way, the tradition of the 18th and 19th centuries. Their voyages to Greece were more like ‘pilgrimages’, paying homage to the countries that ‘gave birth to civilisation’. That elitist character of travelling fitted more with the concept of ancient Greek heritage as a unique, irreplaceable and irreproducible work of art. It also served the circulation of the fame of Greek heritage, while it kept it

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39 Pheidias is the sculptor of the Parthenon, Halepâs is a modern Greek sculptor and Kerameikos is the cemetery of ancient Athens.

40 A similar statement was made in 1999 by the Archbishop of Greece, Hristódulos, who when referring to the reality of globalisation said that ‘the Greeks will not become the waiters of the foreigners’.

41 See Nash 1989 for an approach to tourism as a form of imperialism.
attached to its home of origin and not easily accessible to the masses. By contrast, the idea of mass consumption as represented by mass tourism contradicts the 'impregnable uniqueness' of archaeological sites. It makes them prey to 'the tourist gaze' (Urry 1990). As Walter Benjamin says (1992 [1955]: 232), 'The greatly increased mass of participants has produced a change in the mode of participation. Distraction and concentration form polar opposites, which may be stated as follows: a man who concentrates before a work of art is absorbed by it. [...] In contrast, the distracted mass absorbs the work of art'. A common bitter joke between Greek tourist guides is what by now has become a slogan: 'It is Tuesday, so we are in Athens' (see also Graburn 1989: 21). It refers to their experience of tourists realising where they are because of the timetable which they have been given by the agent. Mass tourism transforms monuments from a privileged sight to a part of an itinerary routine. It makes them 'easy'. It is not the tourists who have to go through difficulties and sacrifices in order to reach the sites any more. On the contrary, the sites must be adjusted to the needs of the tourists.

When the writer of the text quoted above complained about the ill effects of tourism, he could not have expected the dimensions tourism was destined to acquire in Greece. Especially, after the colonels' dictatorship (1967-1974) mass-tourism went out of control and got drawn into the vortex of the international market and international economic interests. Today, big international tour operators tend to eliminate the Greek operators, and tourism slips more and more from Greek hands. The Greeks, rather than being hosts, now experience themselves as becoming subjected to the logic of 'globalisation', often perceived as a 'market hegemony' and they feel that those who once were 'guests' have simply become 'customers' and the educational tours, commodities for consumption.

Leontis (1995: 46) has mentioned the complaints expressed by Western travellers about '[mass] tourism as a phenomenon incongruous with the sacredness of the Acropolis', which does not allow them 'to see Hellas through Plato's eyes'. For them, mass tourism disrupts the Acropolis' aesthetic appreciation. In Greece, however, mass tourism today is often perceived as a threat to the local Greek identity and it is often accused of distorting landscape, history, and people. As an example, I quote the words of Mihalis Tiverios, professor of archaeology (To Vima 7/9/97) who refers to the
inefficiency of the Greek tourist policy and expresses his fears that the ‘national industry’ might turn out to be a boomerang for the Greek national identity:

Let those in charge mention in their annual report – apart from the amount of the foreign currency that poured into Greece, and the other economic profits that our tourist policy produced – also the extent of the maltreatment of the Greek landscape and the adulteration of the people of this country which took place because of it, how violently our history, our aesthetics and our pride have been injured, how much our manners and customs have been alienated and how less Greek we have become.
The reaction to mass tourism as an aspect of globalisation is not confined to statements and aphorisms by political figures only, such as Melína Merkúri or Hristódulos (Figure 45, Figure 46). A 6th GR student expressed her strong complaints about the Acropolis 'being insulted' by the fact that, 'when you visit the Acropolis, which is a Greek place all labels giving information about the monuments are written in English and not in Greek'. This is how the student experiences the rhetoric about the unequal relationship between Greece and 'the world'.

In fact resistance against foreign hegemony can also become practice in the way archaeological sites themselves are set up in order to serve tourists: according to Greek tourist guides and archaeologists, when American tourists visit the Acropolis they repeatedly ask why there isn’t any escalator to facilitate the ascent to and the

Figure 46: Cartoons by KYR, criticising the levelling effects of mass tourism. In the cartoon in the bottom tourists are represented as sheep, baaing, and led by the tourist guide/shepherd into a tourist bus labelled *To Mandri* (The sheepfold).

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42 This is not true information though.
descent from the archaeological site. The reaction of both tourist guides and archaeologists to such a request is strong:

When will they realise that ascending to the Acropolis hill is not like visiting a super-market? This is the essential difference between a traveller-pilgrim and a tourist. The first one knows that visiting the Acropolis is a process. The second one wants to reach the top with the least effort and sacrifice. The Acropolis, however, does require effort (archaeologist).

Greek tourist guides also complain that, while ‘travellers’ used to come with the desire to discover Greek culture ‘tourists’ come and go without really having left their country at all, as they do not bother to understand or to even feel a reality different than theirs. As a tourist guide said:

They take back home nothing else but photos, which they then display to their friends and relatives. In the same way, they demonstrate their new video camera they display the places they have visited. This is what I call consumption (emphasis in the original).

The ‘consumption’ of sites such as the Acropolis is seen in a metaphorical way as a consequence of the giganticness of mass tourism, which ‘swallows up’ cultural uniqueness. Consumption, however, can also be literal: especially during the high season, when sites such as the Acropolis are unbearably crowded, the monuments become worn out and endangered. The way an archaeologist commented on the wearing of the monuments because of the thousands of tourists who step on them is quoted below:

This place [the archaeological site of the Acropolis] was made for a specific reason. The fact that we change its function as time passes by, does not mean that the place can withstand it. When I worked in Olympia, I was allocated the job to see what is the condition of the temple of Hera. Well, the doorstep had lost four centimetres. This means that if you leave the temple open to the tourists you do not serve its function, i.e. you do not make it known to people. You consume it in its most literal sense. You devour it, you swallow it up. In some years there will be no temple. And I do not know whether our interest in letting people [ironically] see it and in all these nice things counts more than it being there for my grandchildren to see. The monument will not be there when it is trampled. It will not be there physically. What I can do is to constrain it, to close it, to make it difficult, to lose money if I have to. Yes, it does sound elitist, but it does not matter. I am sorry.
What is clear from the above is that tourism is directly involved in the paradoxical relationship of local and global Hellenism as discussed in the previous chapter: as we have already seen, the projection of the global character of Greek heritage entails the danger of negating its local uniqueness. In a similar way, tourism on the one hand accomplishes the 'national mission' of promoting Greek heritage internationally, while on the other it puts Greek heritage in danger through exposing it to global consumption. The only way out of this paradox is developing a discourse, which allows the reconcilia
tion and the co-existence of the local and the global. Hence the distinction between travellers and tourists, travelling as pilgrimage and travelling as consumption. Such a distinction permits the existence of tourism as long as it is practiced by 'travellers' seeking cultural uniqueness, rather than 'tourists' who destroy it.

V.E. CONCLUSIONS

In the previous chapter, I situated the Greek discourse about Greek classical heritage in the framework of the relationship between the global and the local. In this chapter, I discussed further this relationship by examining how features considered 'typical' of globalisation, such as homogenisation, mass consumption and commodification are incorporated in this local-global negotiation. Mass production or consumption are juxtaposed with authenticity, commodification with inalienability, materialism with spirit. These contrasts, however, only stand as metaphors of the Greek versus foreign contestation and they serve the projection of the uniqueness of Greek identity. Issues, such as the importance of the spirit against materiality, the disdain of money and of individual interests, the search for the real against the fake, the efforts for classical antiquity's resurrection create a kind of aesthetics, which seems pervaded by a Christian ethic. In fact as a response to commodification and mass consumption the Greeks project the sacredness of archaeological sites. This is the question, which I will try to explore further in the following chapter.
CHAPTER VI. THE AESTHETICS OF SACREDNESS

VI.A. INTRODUCTION

As early as the beginning of the 19th century classical antiquities became sacred symbols of the Greek nation. Official rhetoric often describes them as 'sacred heirlooms of antiquity', and the Athenian Acropolis, the ultimate specimen of classical antiquity, is today known in Greece as the 'sacred rock'. Anderson (1991: 12) has underlined the need to consider both religion and nationalism as cultural systems, the latter following the former. Other authors have also pointed out the similarities between nationalist imagining and religious ideology (e.g. Herzfeld 1992: 34-39; Kapferer 1988; Eriksen 1993: 107-8; Gellner 1983: 56). Anderson suggests that the dawn of nationalist ideology in 18th century Europe coincided with the dusk of religious systems of thought. The new group identity, the 'imagined community of the nation', had to absorb and incorporate many religious concepts and ritual practices. Drawing on Anderson's argument, we have discussed elsewhere (Hamilakis and Yalouri 2000) how classical antiquities, being considered national heirlooms, have acquired religious connotations since the establishment of the Greek state. There, we have also explored the ways in which – with the establishment of the Greek state – Greek nationalism followed and incorporated many elements of Orthodoxy. The sacredness of antiquities has emerged in different contexts throughout this work. In the previous chapter, we saw how the idea of antiquities' sacredness arose as a reaction to their commodification and the appropriation of Greek heritage by 'the others'. In this chapter, my aim is to explore further the nature of this concept of 'sacredness' with which the Acropolis has been attributed, and to discuss the ways in which people perceive it, make use of it, and reproduce it. I will try to demonstrate how this sacredness is enmeshed with other social values and, how together with the Acropolis' consideration as a work of 'high art', it constitutes a certain aesthetic: the aesthetic of sacredness.
VI.B. GREEK SYNCRETISM

Orthodoxy is the official religion of the Greek state. Church and state lend authority to each other. Their close relationship is also evidenced by the fact that two important celebrations of the Greek Orthodox Church, namely the Annunciation of the Virgin (25\textsuperscript{th} of March) and the Dormition of the Virgin (15\textsuperscript{th} of August) are also significant celebrations of the Greek state. The first one is the day on which Greeks celebrate the beginning of the War of Independence in 1821 and the second is the day appointed for honouring the Greek Military Forces. Another striking piece of evidence for the connection between religious and political sentiments is the Akáthistos Hymn, sung in honour of the Virgin by a standing congregation every Friday from the seventh to the third Friday before Easter. It is a recollection of the all-night vigil during which, according to tradition, the hymn was first sung in thanksgiving for the protection against the Avar siege of Constantinople in 626 A.D. This hymn also has a triumphal and political character. The joint celebration of religion and the nation is not coincidental. It alludes to the difficult moments in which, according to Greek tradition, the Virgin has intervened to help the Greek nation from Byzantine times until today (cf. Kathimerini 18/8/96). Thus Virgin Mary (Panayía), the mother of Jesus, becomes the mother of the Greek nation (to yénos) who comes to their aid in their hour of need.

As mentioned in chapter I, Herzfeld (1987: 111) has described Greek identity as consisting of two parallel sets of representations - that of classical Hellenism and that of Byzantine Christian Orthodoxy. The oscillation between these two parallel traditions he termed 'disemia'. Stewart (1994) has explored this disemia and the synthesis of these two facets of the Greek national identity under the prism of syncretism, the synthesis of two different religions. He notes that in the beginning the Church found it very difficult to accept that its congregation, the contemporary Greeks, had affinities with their pagan polytheistic ancestors. However, he also finds that 'with the passage of time many of these local practices simply became naturalised as parts of the accepted Christian tradition of a particular place, region or country' (1994: 134).

\footnote{Stewart 1994, see below.}
As mentioned in chapter IV, in pre-revolutionary Greece, the Greek name for Greeks, *Hellenes*, was connected with paganism. The ‘Hellenic’ language was the ancient Greek language and *Ellinikó* (Hellenic) was also the name of sites with ruins or ancient graves (Kakridís 1989: 41ff). Some intellectuals had advocated adopting the names *Hellenes* for modern Greeks, but these names were not prevalent. Such names as *Grekós*, *Grekía* and *Romíós* dominated (Politis 1993). Furthermore, the Patriarchate of Constantinople, as the official representative of Greek Orthodoxy, denied the Hellenic identity of its congregation until well into the 19th century. I quote the words of Father Kosmás Etolós, a leading figure in the pre-revolutionary Epirus region:

My brothers [and sisters], I heard that, with the grace of Jesus Christ and of God, you are not Hellenes, you are not impious, heretics, atheists, but you are Orthodox Christians (cited in Kakridís 1989: 14).

![Figure 47: Left: The Archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Church of North America, Iákovos, visiting the Acropolis (source: Megaloíkonómu archive). Right: Three priests in front of the statues of Dioskouroi at the museum of Delphi (source: N. Kontos).](image)

After the declaration of the autocephaly (administrative independence) of the Greek Church and its independence of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, however, ‘the church of Greece spearheaded all nationalist initiatives in the later part of the 19th and throughout the 20th century’ (Kitromilides 1989: 166). Thus, today it plays a leading part as the guardian of the Greek national interests, together with the state (Figure
47). In an article about the Orthodox church and political culture in modern Greece, Theofánis Stávru (1995: 39) recalls a huge canvas displayed in Constitution Square in Athens in the summer of 1969, '[...] portraying three ingredients that were then being put forth as representing the essence of Greek civilisation and culture: the Acropolis, dominated by the Parthenon, and a procession heading towards it led by black-robed hierarchs followed by military officers'.

As Herzfeld has shown, the ambivalence of a Christian Orthodox nation embracing the ideals of a pagan past was overcome through the finding of 'survivals'. This process was undertaken by Greek folklorists, especially Nikólaos Polítis, the founder of the discipline of folklore studies in Greece and the first folklore professor, and was meant to reconcile these two originally conflicting aspects in Greek national identity. As Herzfeld has noted (1982: 104), 'Politis was revising Tylor's use of survivals – which referred to retentions from primitive phases of human evolutionary development – and refashioning it to suit the Greek situation where the survivals were relics from highly developed ancient forebears (ibid: 102ff)'.

According to that logic, the two pillars of Greek identity, the Parthenon and St Sophia, did not express two contradicting ideologies. On the contrary, they were considered products of the same spirit, conveyed by a uniform and homogeneous nation throughout centuries and could therefore appear close together when it came to the definition of Greekness. The 19th century historian Konstandínos Paparrigópoulos, who tried to bridge the gap between ancient and modern Greece by projecting the importance of the Byzantine period, considered St Sophia as a 'half-brother of the Parthenon'. He wrote: '[...] is the Parthenon anything else than the national temple of the divine wisdom? Maybe the art of Anthemios and Isidoros was different from that of Iktinos', but the impression they both evoked is the same (Dimaras 1970: 146). St Sophia, for Paparrigópoulos, stands for the missing link of Byzantium in a chain of continuity comprising the timeless Glory of the Greek nation. A few years later Periklís Yannópoulos, in his quest to prove the cultural continuity of Hellenism writes: 'In the domes of temples the head of Zeus dominates; Zeus and the young Pantocrator have in essence one [and the same] head. Virgin Mary is a blood sister of the ancient

44 For a case of conflict between the Church and the State see Stewart 1998.
Greek marble goddesses’ (Yannópulos 1938 [1902]: 77). Even today, the Parthenon and St Sophia appear as two features of Greek identity, equally meaningful, interconnected, and widely recognised.

In his inaugural lecture in 1998, the archbishop of Athens and of all Greece, Hristódulos, called Mount Athos – a monastic society intimately linked with the history and the meaning of Orthodoxy – ‘the Acropolis of our Orthodox Faith’. On the same occasion, he emphasised the interrelation of classical antiquity and Orthodoxy:

In the same way that it is inconceivable that a young Greek might complete his or her general education without learning which metaphysics gave birth to the Parthenon and the ancient Greek democracy, it is equally inconceivable that he/she might ignore which theology built St Sophia [...]. With its loaded ancient history, Athens, conveyor of a world with a universal range, was renowned both as a city and as a spirit. Its Parthenon, a work of faith of its, in all respects, pious inhabitants, remained a specimen of genuine devoutness of our ancestors throughout the centuries. It is the same Parthenon, the ecumenical symbol of our city’s civilisation, that remained a converted temple of the Virgin of Athens [Panayía Athiniótisa] for a thousand years when the new faith followed the old one, continuing the worship of the real God inside the same building, the structure of which it respected. It continues to be a universal and unique object of respect for all humankind until today and until the end of the world.

Orthodoxy comes out as a specific distinction of Greek identity and together with classical antiquity defines Greekness today. The syncretism of Orthodoxy and classicism, however, does not simply remain on the level of an official discourse. On the contrary, it becomes accommodated in people’s attitudes. It is translated into an embodied practice. The concept of ‘sacredness’, a term referring as much to churches as to classical ancient sites such as the Acropolis, is one serving this end. Through the

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45 Periklis Yannópulos (1869-1910) is considered to be one of those who introduced the integration of Greek culture, Greek nature, and Greek people by arguing that the basis of the Greek aesthetics is the Greek earth and that ‘all the beauty and nobleness that exists in it, also exists in [the Greeks]. To quote Yannópulos (1965 [1903]: 41):

‘[...] It is a paradox, that the idea of the curved lines of the Parthenon are so much admired, as it is obvious that a real artist having to erect lines on an Attica hill, could not possibly consider anything else, than to keep these lines in tune with the surrounding harmonic curve [...]. And it is the [same] line which we see in all ancient statues and artworks in Byzantine Virgins and saints, in folklore songs, in [...] the contemporary young villager [...]’.

46 The Greek word deisidaimon can have two meanings, ‘pious’ and ‘superstitious’. I choose to translate it in its first meaning, as it is more in tune with what Hristódulos says later about the Athenians’ devoutness.
concept of sacredness, religious and nationalist connotations fuse the two facets of Greek identity. But how has this sacredness been validated by people who follow the Christian traditions and how is it expressed?

VI.C. THE ‘WORSHIP’ OF THE ACROPOLIS

Figure 48: Two tâmata (votives) depicting the Parthenon (source: Kardamitsi-Adámi (n.d.)).

In her book about modern Greek votives (tâmata), the architect Máro Kardamitsi-Adámi (n.d.: 22) presents two such votives depicting the Parthenon (Figure 48). As she notes, ‘obviously, the faithful did not offer the votive of the Parthenon as part of a request to obtain it. It is very likely that it is a votive of some immigrant, symbolising his return home or it might have been made during the period of the German occupation and it symbolises the liberation of Athens, or finally it might remind the faithful of some event that took place in this site’.\footnote{I would even suggest that, if the votives are old enough, they might have requested the protection of the Parthenon as a representation of Athens or Greece from the German invasion of WWII.} Whatever this votive is meant to provide to the faithful, it does remain a materialisation of Greek identity’s syncretism. Except that here it is not a deliberate intellectual association of classicism and
Orthodoxy, but a genuine expression of a personalised and internalised idea of the way the two facets of Greek identity are bound in one.

There have been several case studies demonstrating how the sacred places of the past retain their cultural and religious significance and how they become incorporated in new religions or cultural systems and beliefs. Cooney (1994), for example, argued in his study of Neolithic tombs in Ireland that some of them have continued to be the focus of burials. They have become accommodated in folk beliefs and have retained their cultural significance. There are other examples, like the temple of Athena in Syracuse (440-420 BC), which, in the Christian era, became a temple dedicated to the Madonna. The temple of *Madonna con melograno* (the Virgin with the pomegranate) in Paestum was built on a temple of a deity depicted holding a pomegranate.

In Greece several sacred sites have become naturalised as parts of the Christian tradition. Apart from all Palaeochristian basilicas built over or next to major ancient temples such as Olympia, Delphi or Dodona during the first years of the Christian era, there are also examples of many churches still celebrating mass today. To name just a few, consider the little church of *Áyios Nikólaos* (St Nicolas), the patron saint of seafarers, built on the foot of the hill where the temple of Poseidon (the ancient god of the sea) in Sounio lies, or *Ayía Moní*, dedicated to the Virgin and built in Náfplio next to Canathus, the sacred ancient fountain where the goddess Hera used to bathe. In Athens, the little church of *Áyios Yánnis tis Kolónas* (St John of the Column) is built on an earlier temple dedicated to Ianiskos, a healer deity (Figure 49), while the temple of Hephaistos (Theseion) functioned for a long time as a church dedicated to St George.

The Acropolis' sacredness has been reproduced under different forms for centuries. Ever since ancient Greek gods were worshipped on the hill of the Acropolis, there has been a long tradition of the site being perceived as sacred. The Parthenon, first conceived as the temple of goddess Athena, became successively an Orthodox Christian church, a Roman Catholic church and, under the Ottoman Empire, a mosque (see Chapter II). The small church of Zoodóhos Pígí (see also below – p. 156) was founded in one of the caves of the south slope of the Acropolis hill next to Asklepios' (the ancient god of healing) temple (Figure 50). The water of its fountain is still believed to have healing properties.
Hubert, discussing the reactions of indigenous peoples to the desecration of their sacred sites, attributes the difficulty archaeologists and developers face in understanding these reactions to the fact that it is possible within the Western Christian religion to deconsecrate sacred sites. ‘A church’, she says, ‘can be deconsecrated, by the carrying out of rituals, so that it becomes a secular site, an ordinary building that can then be used for any purpose’ (Hubert 1994: 13-14). This is not the case, however, for Orthodox Christianity (cf. Stewart 1998: 8-9). Once a place is sacred it remains so and its sacredness cannot be undone. Thus, the long tradition of the Acropolis as a site of cult is not erased in people’s minds and consciousness.

Figure 49: The little church of Áyios Yán尼斯 tis Kolόnαs (St John of the Column) in Athens. The Corinthian column belongs to an earlier temple dedicated to Ianίskοs (photo by A. H. Yalouri).

Stewart has pointed out that the character of Orthodoxy has been described as mystical and miraculous in relation to Catholicism or Protestantism (1989: 77). He adds:

On the Cycladic island of Naxos, for example, virtually every village possesses lively traditions regarding people who were illuminated by God, or accounts of icons which washed up from the sea and then moved mysteriously to the spot where a church was to be constructed. This close experience of theofany within Orthodoxy is relevant in that it may
contribute to a more general predisposition on the part of the Greek populace to embrace explanations in terms of supernatural agents (ibid).

In pre-revolutionary Greece, ancient sites or objects were associated with the supernatural and the sacred, and ordinary Greek people had a mythical image of the past. ‘Hellenes’ were thought to be a people from a very remote past, as big as giants and possessing supernatural strength and capabilities (Kakridís 1989: 45-6). The site of the Acropolis itself is linked with such miracles. Kamburoglu recounts that during the War of Independence the olive tree next to the Erechtheion was burnt. During the

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48 Ancient Greeks also occur as saints in the Christian era: There are several Christian churches decorated with hagiographies of ancient Greek philosophers (Spetsiéris 1964) (Figure 51).
following years however, the tree became revived, which was considered a miracle (Kamburoglu 1922: 83). Among other miracles associated with the site of the Acropolis is that of a Turk who, after shooting an icon of the Virgin inside the Parthenon-Church, had his hand paralysed. In yet another one, a Turk died after attempting to open two big vestries on the walls of the temple, hoping that he would find a treasure (ibid: 77). The most well-known legend associated with the Acropolis is that of the marbled princesses – the Caryatids of the Erechtheion – who were revived after the abduction of their sister by Lord Elgin, so that one could hear them lamenting every night for their loss (ibid: 82). It is difficult to situate the exact periods of these legends’ origin. Kamburoglu, writing at the beginning of the 20th century, had been exposed to the new ideology of ancient sites’ sacredness, and, probably, so have those who recounted the stories to him. Therefore, we cannot really distinguish to what extent these stories represent concepts of pre-revolutionary Orthodox people living around the Acropolis or modern Greeks, citizens of the capital of the new state. This in itself, however, reveals the concept of sacredness with which ancient sites are vested, representing a fusion of practices and perceptions related to these sites, and always adjusting to new sets of needs.

An old Athenian, who has lived on the slopes of the Acropolis for all her life, was talking to me about her mother: ‘Kira-Thodóra was making the sign of the cross every time she went to the top of the Acropolis’. And she went on explaining:

The Acropolis lives, it pulsates, it has spirit. It has sacredness, this is why they call it ‘sacred rock’. This is why they constructed all these little churches on the slopes of the hill. Kira-Thodóra founded the little church of Zoodóhos Piyí. She took the icon of Zoodóhos Piyí to the church and she

Figure 51: Hagiographies of Aristotle (from left), Thucydides, and Plutarch. The first is in Moni Filanthropinón, and the other two in Moní Iviron (source: Spetsiérís 1964).
left it there for 40 days…. [She goes on explaining the customary procedure Kira-Thodóra followed in order to consecrate the place].

Nobody knows whether Kira-Thodóra decided to found the little church on the Acropolis hill because she considered it sacred or whether she considered the hill sacred because of all these little churches that already existed on the slope of the Acropolis. Also, one cannot know whether her perception of sacredness was the same with the perception of all those who live in Athens and who call the hill of the Acropolis ‘sacred’, some of them without even knowing of the existence of the little churches. What is true, however, is that the site has been linked with cults of various periods and cultures including that of the ‘secular religion of nationalism’ (Hamilakis and Yalouri 2000).

Yiôrgos, a geologist and owner of a small business, told me that he feels magic on the Acropolis. He likes to be at the site on Good Friday and to listen from up there to all the Athenian church bells ringing together. ‘At that moment I feel that the two civilisations [politismi – the Byzantine and the ancient classical] meet’ he said. Yiôrgos’ perception of the Acropolis’ sacredness, promoted also through education, mass media and state rhetoric, which he is exposed to on an everyday basis, is, however, shaped through his very personal experiences of what the sacred means in relation to his religion. The sacredness of antiquity is internalised through the sacredness of Orthodoxy. It is a concept which manages to link two different ‘civilisations’ and create ‘the magic’ of a nation with a long, continuous history.

After the War of Independence, there was a much wider awareness of the ancient world and its links with the contemporary, rebel Greek nation. This awareness among the intellectuals and politicians of the time, as well as among ordinary, uneducated people (Kakridís1981: 62), was the result of an interest in education as part of the wider reconstruction of the nation (see Kulúri 1988: 13-15). I do not believe, however, that education and the secular religion of nationalism divested the ancient Greek past from its miraculous connotations. If the pre-revolutionary image of the past wanted the Acropolis site linked with miracles and the Hellenes vested with supernatural powers, the situation did not change radically in the state period. The pre-revolutionary Hellenes/giants became accommodated to the ideology of the
nation-state and they became 'giants' in quotation marks. Their gigantic physical qualities were replaced by a 'gigantic' cultural aura.

VI.D. VISUALISING THE ACROPOLIS

Another element which contributed to the construction of the Acropolis' sacredness is its aesthetic appreciation and its praise as a work of high art. The Acropolis is systematically praised for being the 'most outstanding architectural monument in the world', a 'masterpiece', 'the jewel not only of Athens, but of the whole of Greece', as 'adorning Greek history'. Even today, the Acropolis cannot be seen divested from its high artistic value. Walter Benjamin (1992 [1955]: 217-8) wrote:

We know that the earliest art works originated in the service of a ritual – first the magical, then the religious kind. It is significant that the existence of the work of art with reference to its aura is never entirely separated from its ritual function. In other words, the unique value of the 'authentic' work of art has its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value. This ritualistic basis, however remote, is still recognisable as secularised ritual, even in the most profane forms of the cult of beauty.

Shanks and Tilley argue that 'by approaching something “aesthetically”’, we divest it from the trivia of oppression, of conflict, of everything social’ (1992: 73). In other words we raise it onto another sphere, we make it absolute and unreachable. In that respect art is similar to religion. Although both religious and aesthetic values are socially and ideologically located, religion and art are often considered non-political categories, and this fact can render them even more powerful ideological tools. For the present study it is interesting to witness such power in relation to the way sacredness and aesthetics work to legitimise the authority of the Greek nation state.

Leontis (1995: 40-66) has shown how the classical education of Western travellers to Greece formed their sense of the Acropolis and of Greece in general as a holy ground. She highlighted how much the ‘pilgrimage’ sentiment they took to Greece was associated with their wish to see the aesthetic values and styles of classicism resurrected.

'The Prayer' of Ernest Renan on the Acropolis (1865-1876) was a prayer not simply to the ancient Greek gods, but a praise to the beauty and the ideals of classical Hellenism. He addressed the goddess Athena: 'O noble! O simple and true beauty!
Goddess whose creed signifies reason and wisdom, thou whose temple is an eternal lesson of conscience and sincerity' (Renan [1865] 1993: 8) and he continues:

Thou alone art young, O Kora! Thou alone art pure, O Virgin! Thou alone art strong, O Victory! Thou alone art sane, O Hygeia. The cities, thou guardest them, O Promachos! Thou hast the valor of Mars, O Areia! Peace is thy end, O Pacific One, Legislatrice, source of just constitutions! Democracy, thou whose fundamental dogma is that everything good comes from the people, and that, when there is nothing to inspire genius in a race, all is lost, teach us to extract the diamond from the dull herd! Providence of Zeus, divine artisan, mother of all industry, protectrice of labor, O Ergane, thou who makest noble the civilized toiler and givest him a place far above the lazy Skythian; Wisdom, thou to whom Zeus gave birth [...] (ibid: 10).

In Renan’s verses beauty is nothing but absolute sincerity, rationality, wisdom and conscience. The temple of Athena is a temple of Peace, Democracy and Labour. It is a temple of Civilisation. Similarly, the art of the Acropolis’ monuments is often admired in Greece, because it is identified with democracy. Parthenon for example, is attributed ‘spirituality’, ‘humanity’, ‘plainness’, ‘nobleness’ in its lines, and ‘peacefulness in its surfaces’ (Miliádis n.d.), and it is considered as ‘everything high and noble’ (Filadelféas 1928: 139). The praise to the beauty of the Acropolis monuments can, at the same time, be praise to the social and religious values this beauty represents. Aesthetic values can be translated into religious or social terms such as sincerity, plainness, respect, and vice versa. High aesthetics reflect high values, all of them intermingling to provide evidence for the existence of a high civilisation. Although for Renan this high civilisation was probably identified with what we have so far termed ‘global Hellenism’, for the Greeks it is part of a much more personal Hellenism. The association between religion, art, civilisation and their association with modern Greece becomes evident in the following statements by 6th PR students, also illuminating their understanding of what a ‘high civilisation’ consists of:

The Acropolis was the evidence for the great cultural development that we had in Athens. The building [sic] of the Acropolis being the most perfect and expensive one, the various statues, as well as the most important achievement, namely democracy made the Athenians proud of their homeland (emphasis added).

The Acropolis shows how much our ancestors were developed and interested in good taste, art, sculpture, architecture, faith and worship of the gods [sic] (emphasis added).
However, not only can a ‘sacred’ monument, considered of high artistic value, stand as a representation of Greek identity, but this relationship can be reversed, and Greekness often becomes an aesthetic value. For example, in various discussions about Greekness in art, Greekness is often identified with values, such as harmony, light, and moderation. This close relationship is, for example, evident in the wider quest of Greekness in art in the 1930s, which urges painters such as Hatzikiriákos-Gíkas (1906-1998) to seek elements of ‘higher civilisation’ in all aspects of Greek life. He finds that ‘the structure and the proportions of the ancient Doric temple exist in a primitive form in most of the shacks of the Greek countryside’ (cited in Filippídis 1984: 196).

This aesthetisation of Greekness is very much a product of the establishment of the Greek state. The privileged position that modern Western culture gives to ‘vision’ in relation to other senses has led to an ‘aesthetisation’ of everyday life. The mythologies of “objectivity”, “pure vision”, “bias-freedom” and the “naked eye” (Jenks 1995: 11), products of an ‘ocularcentric’ society pervaded by Cartesian perspectivalism (Jay 1992) has generated an equivalent attitude in the way we perceive our surrounding world. This has led Susan Buck-Morss (1992: 6-7) to note that while ‘The original field of aesthetics is not art but reality – corporeal, material nature…within the course of the modern era, the term “aesthetics” underwent a reversal of meaning so that in Benjamin’s time it was applied first and foremost to art – to cultural forms rather than sensible experience, to the imaginary rather than the empirical, to the illusory rather than the real’. Thus, Buck-Morss argues that aesthetic experience has ended up as an ‘anaesthetic’, numbing the human sensorium. I would now like to show how, with the establishment of the Greek state, an ‘aesthetic’ look resulted in an ‘anaesthetic’ conception of the site of the Acropolis. It therefore started being experienced more as an image, than a site associated with everyday practices and felt with senses other than vision.

As already mentioned in Chapter II, when the question of which city should claim the right to become the capital of the new state arose, the choice was made because of Athens’ link with the glory of the classical world (Polítis 1993: 75). The Acropolis was the monument epitomising that glory. It became the image of Greece, which the new state would project all over the world.
Even in the words of people of that time one can see how the Acropolis features as a vision rather than an actual physical existence. Especially revealing are the words of the British wife of Alexandros-Rizos-Rangavis, an intellectual of 19th century Athens: ‘The new buildings, expanded in the slopes and the foot of the Acropolis, seemed as if they were kneeling before the Parthenon which crowned them’ (ibid: 85) (Figure 52). When, in 1853, in an article in the periodical *Néa Pandóra*, Athens claims the title of the Sovereign from Constantinople, it appears ‘wearing the Acropolis, with its outstanding architectural miracles, as a royal crown on its head’ (*Néa Pandóra* 67, 1.1.1835: 441). In 1857, the road around the Acropolis hill was under construction. At the time, a columnist in the newspaper *Athiná* imagined the hill to be planted over with trees, and ‘the city of Athens, wearing the unique and incomparable antiquities from the Pendelian marble, which provoke the admiration of all the civilised world, as a glorious and valuable crown on its head’ (*Athiná* 2511, 3/1/1857).

![Figure 52: A bust of the personification of Athens, crowned by the Acropolis, in front of the cultural centre of the municipality of Athens (photo by A. H. Yalouri).](image)

Before the establishment of the Greek state, the Acropolis and its surrounds was an inhabited area, intimately linked with the everyday life of the Athenians. Soon afterwards, however, the first attempts of an expropriation and entrenchment of the area took place. Its transformation into ‘heritage’ and the museification of the place, however, did not emerge until the period of the urbanisation of Athens during the first

49 The personification of cities crowned with their fortresses is an ancient tradition.
decade of the reign of George I (1863-1913). The 'purification' of the Acropolis from
the more recent buildings mentioned earlier, was completed with the demolition of the
Frankish tower in the Propylaea by the Archaeological Society in 1874. The removal
of relics of more recent years from the environment deprived space from its historicity
and reduced it to an eclectic and isolated world. It made it frozen in time and space; it
transformed it into a landscape. This perception is also manifested in the lighting of
the Acropolis as early as the 19th century on the occasion of the visits of distinctive
guests in Athens (see Filippidis 1994) and later on, in the 'Son et Lumière'
presentations (see below, p. 190).

Rather than a lived place, the Acropolis became an objectified landscape, an image of
Greece. As has been noted (e.g. Cosgrove 1989; Cosgrove and Daniels 1988; Tilley
1994; 1993a), the term 'landscape', as opposed to the terms 'place' or 'space,'
signifies a particular conception of space, which presupposes its distancing and
objectification by the people who now become its observers. 'Landscape' thus entails
the concept of a certain perspective, and it implies that there can be many different
landscapes of a single site like the Acropolis, e.g. the American, the European, the
Greek etc.

The viewing of the Acropolis as landscape does not allow anything to interrupt or to
spoil the high aesthetics that it represents, exactly like in a beautiful art-painting. In
fact, the otherwise anarchic build-up of the city of Athens has always followed rules
regarding the unobstructed viewing of the sacred site, thus creating physical and
symbolic boundaries between the area of the Acropolis and the rest of the city (see
also chapter III). A revealing example is the discussion about the position of the Law
Megaron of Álexandros Nikolúdis in the area of the military hospital of Makriyánnis
around 1931. The dome of the planned building, with its height of 60 metres, would
obstruct the view to the Acropolis. During discussions about the construction of this
Megaron, an article by Ernesto Ebrar, professor at the School of Architecture at the
Technical University of Athens and director of the studies of school buildings in the
Greek Ministry of Education, is indicative. Ebrar imagines with repulsion 'the transit

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50 In 1834, on the day of the national celebration of the arrival of king Otto, the first king of the Greek
state, John Hill, an American missionary who built the first school in the capital of the new Greek state,
wrote in his diary: 'The town was partially illuminated – and as a novelty, the Acropolis, with pine
knots placed on the turrets of the ramparts and the embrasures' (John Hill, personal diary – I thank
Mrs. Panayotopoulou for giving me access to the diary).
of many cars, the smell of benzene, and the general disturbance from traffic directly next to the Acropolis’ (Bíris 1995: 307-8). The issue even raised international concern, which finally led to the withdrawal of the original plans (Bíris 1995: 306-308). Similar reactions were provoked by the building of a block of flats in Dionísíu Areopagití Street in 1955. Not only was the interruption of the building works proposed, but also the demolition of the already constructed parts of the building (Elefthería 3433, 13/11/1955). In the discussion of the reconstruction of the Stoa of Attalos in 1949, the architect Kóstas Bíris feared that ‘the size of the building might harm the view to the Acropolis and to the Areios Pagos. This would be more obvious once the Stoa of Attalos would be isolated in the wider area of the archaeological landscape, when the excavations would be continued further towards the east’. Bíris claimed that ‘such a risk is understandable only for the monuments of the classical era, whose beauty is unequalled, whose finesse is inconceivable, and whose purity must be protected from any modern interference’ (Bíris 1995: 386-7).

I have already argued (chapter III) that the Acropolis is being elevated into a ‘monumental time’ (Herzfeld 1991) and space. It is exactly the position the Acropolis occupies in monumental time and space that allows it to watch upon the behaviour of Athenian society. In 1907, a note was published in the newspaper To Asty (1862, 12/1/1907), commenting on a contest over the ownership of land in Athens: ‘The day before yesterday several Greeks slaughtered each other under the eyes of the king of Greeks and [under the eyes] of the Parthenon’. In this context, the Acropolis plays a role similar to that of the king or the eye of God, from which no inappropriate behaviour escapes. Foucault (1977) has used the metaphor of Bentham’s Panopticon to discuss the optical power of the ‘disciplinary regime’, which dominated Europe since the beginning of the 18th century in the establishment of states and their rational control. The Panopticon was originally meant to be applied in the design of prisons. It consisted of a central tall circular building from where a guard would be able to see all cells, while no prisoner would be able to see either the guard or the other prisoners. In a similar way, Foucault argues, people have been subjected to the surveillance and knowledge of both institutions such as prisons, schools, and clinics as well as to sciences – human and social. Following Foucault we might surmise that the Acropolis can also be seen as a Panopticon surveying Greek behaviour. This role has been projected onto it since the establishment of the Greek state. I should note that the
Athenians are not ‘observed’ by the Acropolis in the same way in which prisoners, students, and patients are controlled by the institutionalised spaces they inhabit. By the authority of an idealised past it becomes, however, a point of reference, a yardstick for cultural behaviour, an eye that dictates what is wrong and what is right.

The presence of the Acropolis similarly defines and dictates the aesthetics of the rest of the Athenian landscape: during the first decade of the 20th century, when some expressions of Art Nouveau in architecture appeared in Athens, a contemporary newspaper wrote the following: ‘On the foot of the Acropolis, opposite the Parthenon one can see the deplorable view of the newly appeared and obscene Art Nouveau with its crazy lines and its mad curves’ (Athenai 17.4.1903).

The wide disapproval of the building of the Hilton hotel (built in the 1960s) was also characteristic. Its construction was considered a blow to the aesthetics of Athens and especially to the Acropolis. Indicative of this is the critique of the professor of history of architecture at Yale University, Vincent Scully:

> for a landscape that once was sacred, this degradation is especially bitter and didactic. This is the story of a unique, but especially acute aspect of the whole problem, the great blow that the Acropolis received lately. […] If one stands inside the Parthenon at the point where Pheidias had placed the gold-and-ivory statue of Athena, one will observe that the temple was orientated directly and rightly towards the sunset over the mountain.\(^{51}\) Now, however, it is orientated towards the sun and the Hilton, the basket-like face of which squints towards the axis between the two middle columns. […] It wounds this place, which happens to be Athens, the Acropolis of which it is competing with in size (Biris 1995: 396-70).

Shanks and Tilley (1992: 71-73), in their discussion of the ‘aesthetisation of the artifact’, bring up the comparison made by Spanos (1977: 427) between Greek antiquities exhibited – free-standing or in glass cases with minimum information – in big international museums, such as the British Museum and icons. They quote the words by Berger on the Russian icon (1969: 20-21):

> In the Russian icon neither space nor time exists. It addresses the eye, but the eye, which then shuts in prayer so that the image – now in the mind’s eye – is isolated and entirely spiritualised. Yet the images are not introspective – that would already make them too personal; nor are they…mystical; their calm expressions suggest no exceptional experience.

\(^{51}\) The statue stood inside the Parthenon temple. We know its appearance from ancient descriptions or from later copies of it or of parts of it.
They are images of holy figures seen in the light of a heaven in which the people believe so as to make the visible world around them credible.

According to them, the archaeological artifact then becomes a ‘self-bounded, sealed-off, inclusive image’ like an icon and it ‘is displayed in splendid remoteness from the prosaic, from the exigencies of day-to-day life. Following the aesthetics of an icon’s sacredness, the Acropolis is celebrated and elevated to a monumental time and space above the trivia of Athens’ everyday life and it stands as a representation of universal and eternal truths.

VI.E. PURITY AND POLLUTION – FORMALISED BEHAVIOUR

As in religious systems of thought, perceptions of purity and pollution dominate the behaviour towards ‘sacred’ sites (Douglas 1966) and define the urge to keep the Acropolis’ surrounding landscape ‘clean’ and ‘humble’. Nothing is permitted to disrupt the view to the Acropolis, which must remain dominant in the Athenian landscape. There are several main streets, whose axes are aligned so, as to provide a view of the Acropolis along most of their stretch (Figure 53). Cartoons criticising the sorry state of the city of Athens often do so in relation to the Acropolis (Figure 54, Figure 55). Practices or things which violate the classification of the Acropolis as the unique, eternal, and dominant sacred Greek symbol are considered somehow impure, incompatible with the site itself (cf. Hamilakis and Yalouri 2000: 118). An example illustrating this point took place in 1925. A prominent Greek photographer, known as Nelly, took a series of photos of a naked female dancer, Mona Paiva, on the Athenian Acropolis (Figure 56). Originally, the plan was to take some ordinary photos of her. Nelly describes the event (Kásdaglis 1989: 100):

They offered us the guardian’s kiosk for the dancer to get changed. As she was getting undressed I saw her naked body and I was stunned. The sun was falling on it sideways, her skin was rosy and transparent and it looked like a Saxony bibelot. Oh, madam, I said to her, would you allow me to take some naked photos inside those sacred marbles? Your body is asking for it…
This incident was considered a sacrilege and a row arose among archaeologists and journalists. The ‘most sacred monument could not possibly co-exist even temporarily with what in modern Western thought is often attributed immoral and frivolous connotations, the naked female body (cf. Hamilakis and Yalouri 2000). It is interesting that both Nelly and her critics acknowledge the sacredness of the Acropolis, although they appreciate it in opposing aesthetic terms.  

52 Here Nelly compares the dancer’s body with the porcelain or alabaster small statues produced in Saxonia, an area in northern Germany.  

53 Of great interest is a letter in a newspaper column by the early 20th century intellectual Pávlos Nirvánas criticising the attack Nelly had received (Kássaglis 1989: 103-104): ‘[...] Sacrilege! I rack my brain to discover what kind of sacrilege it is that the dear respectful gentlemen refer to. It would be a sacrilege if, in a moment of archaeological enthusiasm over the “Parthenon” marbles, they themselves threw away their veils and pretended to be Hermes by Praxiteles, in his current age. This would indeed be a sacrilege, enough to provoke the intervention, not only of the Archaeological but also of the Palaeontological Society. What is a sacrilege is the romantic orgies which take place on every full moon with the permission of the Ministry of Education, in the vicinity of the Temple of Wisdom. What is a sacrilege is the tumbles of those who are despaired from life, and who transform every now and then the sacred rock into a suicide place. What is a sacrilege is the fireworks which incense the statue of Athena on the official days – fortunately, she is not there anymore to sneeze. [What is a sacrilege is] the broken bottles of Campanitis [champagne], which once covered the floor of her temple after an official meal. All these are sacrileges. But how can the sacred nudity of the rising Aphrodite, who even Gods desire, be a sacrilege? I protest on behalf of the Olympian Gods, who, as it is known, not only walked naked, both male and female, but they were also worshipped naked in their temples [...]’.
Figure 54: Cartoons by Mitropoulos, using the Acropolis as a reference to criticise the sorry state of the city of Athens.
When I started fieldwork I was certain that the consideration of the above incident as an offence to the monument was linked with the morals of that particular era, and that that sentiment would be long gone today. I was surprised to find that this was not the case: when I showed Nelly’s photos to some students and asked them whether they found it reasonable that they provoked so many protests in their time, their reactions were mixed. Some of them thought it was not reasonable. Many of them, however,
were disturbed. In fact, one particular student (5th GR) was most assertive. I cite our dialogue below:

Student: Did she go [to take naked photos on the Acropolis] just like that, without rhyme or reason?

Yalouri: She went to have some photos taken and as she was changing, Nelly saw her, admired her body and asked her whether she could take some photos of her.

Student: She was changing on the Acropolis? And what is the Parthenon, a changing room?

Yalouri: Don't you think that an artistic naked photograph should be taken on the Acropolis?
Student: Of course not; the Acropolis is a monument, it is not a strip-tease club!

Yalouri: Does this mean that you don't find this photo artistic?

Student: It is of course artistic, and the Parthenon is a beautiful place with the Acropolis nearby [sic], but on the other hand many photos have been taken on the Acropolis - only Koromílás has not gone there to make a TV program, but this is not the issue.54

Figure 57: Inscription at the entrance of the Acropolis’ site, forbidding ‘improper or advertising pictures, singing or making loud noises’, etc. (photo by A. H. Yalouri).

Although the student does not state explicitly what ‘the issue is’ about Nelly’s photos, he believes that the naked photos have degraded the site to the level of a strip-tease

54 Popular Greek T.V. show woman.
club. The paradox is that, although he does accept that the photo of a naked body can
be artistic, he cannot accept this might be compatible with the sacred site. Could it be
that a naked body linked with more secular connotations of everyday life cannot be
seen in a sacred context, whatever its artistic value might be? Or maybe, he sees it as
part of a phenomenon whereby anything is permissible in connection with the
Acropolis and people can do whatever they want. If the Acropolis belongs to another
sphere, as argued earlier, it cannot be associated with everyday, mass activities such
as second-rate TV programs.

I encountered a similar attitude by a couple of archaeologists one of whom works on
the site. Their words reveal that the perception of sacredness is actually translated into
practice in the way one is allowed to behave, to act, to be dressed etc. The dialogue
goes as follows:

\[
\text{[...]} \quad \text{Yalouri: You don't like Nelly's photos on the Acropolis?}
\]

\[
\text{Aléxandros: The one where she dances naked (tsitsidi) on the Acropolis?}
\]

No, I don't.

\[
\text{Yalouri: Does it disturb you because she is naked?}
\]

\[
\text{Aléxandros: No, what disturbs me is that she thought that she can make a}
\]

décor out of the Parthenon. The Parthenon is not a décor. She is the décor.

\[
\text{Lydia: Officially, it is forbidden. In the labels we have in the guardroom,}
\]

there is a paragraph which says that taking indecent photos or photos for
advertising reasons in front of, or next to, monuments is not allowed [Figure
57]. This is because several times we have seen completely naked men
taking a photo, or an American who took off his pants and made indecent
gestures in front of the statues. I consider these monuments heirlooms. We
don't allow them to just wear the upper part of their swimming suit. This
would never happen in the Louvre or a cathedral.

\[
\text{Aléxandros: Once I told one of them so and she answered 'But the Louvre}
\]

and here are not the same'. And I answered 'of course, here we have
nothing stolen'. We must realise that there are certain things made for a
particular reason. The Acropolis is not a public place. It is not Sínagma
Square. It is a place, which was made for worship. You cannot ignore this.
It also has a character of worship as a reference point for Hellenism today.
It is the same as if you told me that he went to the Daphni Church or to
Ayios Leftéris naked. Of course the custodian will throw him out.

\[
\text{55 Such an episode took also place in the archaeological site of Knossos in 1998? It was much discussed}
\]

and caricatured, e.g. Figure 58.
Yalouri: But the churches represent a living religion, they are used as such today.

Aléxandros: What does ‘living’ mean? A religion never dies, it changes form, but it doesn’t die. There are no dead religions. This is a blessed place and this does not change, just because we do not make sacrifices to goddess Athena any more. Not to mention the destructive results on the monuments when, for example they spread their suntan lotions. When you hear that there are certain churches in which there has been services have been taking place every Sunday since the 6th century AD, even their walls know how to say the ‘Lord’s Prayer’!

Yalouri: You see, you tell me that even the walls say prayers, however you said that you would demolish the Turkish minaret.

Aléxandros: The mosque existed partially, and was almost destroyed due to the bombardment. The Acropolis was used as a fortress during the War of Independence, not as a monumental site. The Acropolis fought. This is what Pittakis experienced. Pittakis had experienced a nine-year war against the Turks, which coincided with the best years of his life. Would you expect him to leave the mosque because you have the theoretical perceptions of 1996?

Figure 58: Cartoon which appeared in Kathimerini (18/8/98) after an English tourist in Knossos pulled his pants down in front of the antiquities in order to have a picture taken. The inscriptions of the columns from the left are ‘Ionic style’, ‘Doric style’, ‘Corinthian style’, and ‘English style’.

Apart from the issue of syncretism discussed earlier, other issues encountered in previous chapters occur in the dialogue above: the reluctance to make the Parthenon a décor, or allow it to become merely background. Most importantly, the issue of

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56 Pittakis is considered the first Greek archaeologist in the history of the Greek state.
respect for the monument arises. It derives as a reaction to something that contradicts it or refutes it, namely the tourist who does not mind visiting the Acropolis dressed in her swimming costume, whilst she accepts that she would not do so if she were in the Louvre. Although the discussion is triggered by the artistic value of Nelly’s nude photos, the issue of nudity as lack of respect for the monument is discussed by Aléxandros as completely irrelevant to its artistic value. Consequently, Mona Paiva’s nudity is considered equal to the nudity of any tourist who visits the Acropolis wearing only his or her swimming costume. Moreover, the issue acquires a wider dimension and becomes a matter of confrontation between two cultures, the Greek and the French/foreign. For Aléxandros (see also p. 120), the arrogance displayed by the tourist might reflect the imperialist power displayed by the West having ‘stolen’ the Greek heritage, and this arrogance is represented by the tourist at that particular moment. The request for ‘respect’ or ‘seriousness’ is a matter that Aléxandros takes personally, both as an archaeologist and a Greek, because it means acknowledging the importance of his culture, as represented by the Acropolis, on an international level. This is underlined even further by the sympathy he expresses towards Pittákis, an archaeologist famed for his reverence and sentimental attachment towards antiquities and his patriotic role protecting them, during and after the War of Independence.

The same request for respect and ‘seriousness’ linked with the monumentality and authority of the Acropolis’ site was evident in the prompt reaction of the 6th PR students to an idea I brought up of small tables being situated next to the Parthenon, where one could sit and drink one’s refreshments. ‘This is a place that requires some seriousness’ one of them said. ‘If you drink your orange juice, you will not pay any attention to it. We should respect those people who created such a great work’. And another one stated: ‘You can go to the coffee shop to drink your orange juice – in Pláka for example. You go to the Acropolis for another reason, to see the monument’ or ‘I feel it is sacred, because it is an old site, where our ancestors fought’. After that reaction, I reminded them of what they had told me earlier, that when they were at the site for the first time with school, they were having fun and games playing and jumping around the site. The answer to my remark was instant: ‘Well, we were younger at that time...’
The urge to keep the Acropolis untouched and 'clean' is not restricted to activities which can be associated with vulgar or inappropriate behaviour, such as nudity. It can also refer to activities normally considered natural and generally accepted like that of playing. The student feels the need to justify a natural behaviour for a child, namely running and playing with his fellow-students, by saying that he was younger at that time. He prefers to accept that his behaviour was not right and try to find an excuse for it rather than to admit that someone can play at the 'sacred site' without offending the monuments. The negative reaction to the idea of a coffee shop on the Acropolis might also concern its association with mass tourism as described in the previous chapter, another 'polluting' element from which the Acropolis suffers.

It is possible that my presence, which the students knew was specifically for the reason of talking about the Acropolis, biased their answers in that they gave them a more 'serious' tone than they might have had otherwise. It is possible that if they went there again with their school they might still run around and have fun.\(^57\) It is important, however, that they have adopted official discourse about the 'sacredness' of the Acropolis and they are able to reproduce it on demand. No matter what is the drive that leads the children's reaction, the contrast drawn between Pláka, the tourist area of the old city of Athens where one can eat, drink and have fun, and the archaeological site, proves that the children are very much aware of the boundaries between the site of the Acropolis and the rest of Athens.

If the site of the Acropolis is considered a 'sacred' place it is not surprising that it demands a formalised behaviour.\(^58\) As we have seen it is not only foreign tourists' behaviour that is criticised when considered inappropriate and incompatible with the sacredness of the archaeological site. On the contrary, Greeks can be reproached even more sharply, as it is believed that they should be able to know right from wrong when it comes to their national responsibilities. One such example follows:

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57 That was more or less the case with the students of the 4th class of a primary, privately run school, when I accompanied them for their visit to the Acropolis.

58 In a discussion I had with eight tourist guides, they criticised the clothing of the tourists who visit the Acropolis. One of them said that 'Since this is a kind of pilgrimage they cannot visit it dressed “like that”'. Another one felt her civilisation was being insulted. Most of them were extremely disturbed by the fact that Greek pupils were visiting the site with their stereos on. 'This is not an excursion', they said. It is significant though that those kids did apparently consider their school visit to the site an excursion.

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VI.F. THE ACROPOLIS’ GUARDS

When the guards’ union decides to go on strike, one of its tactics is to keep the site of the Acropolis closed. One such case took place in February 1997. The minister declared these strikes illegal and excessive. Antiquities were being characterised as hostages (e.g. Ta Néa 14/2/97) and the whole guards’ initiative as a ‘siege’. A big discussion was generated concerning the issue of ‘who owns the Acropolis’. The guards were condemned under the logic that the Acropolis does not belong to them, but to all humankind. This event also generated much discussion about the rights guards have over the archaeological sites they guard. On the occasion of an earlier guards strike and the connected closure of the Acropolis, the architect Manós Korrés, the head of the restoration works on the Acropolis, underlined that:

using the value that the site where one works has in order to blackmail does not change anything. Just think of the amounts of money that the employees in Dimókritos’ nuclear reactor could ask for if they decided to strike – we would all pay out of fear that lives are in danger (Ta Néa 24/10/94).

Korrés thus implied that Greeks have a duty towards the world in keeping the Acropolis accessible to the world. In doing so, they must allow the Acropolis to spread the ideals that it represents internationally.

In the case of the 1997 strike, the guards were also accused of ridiculing the country and affecting tourism. Also, the issue of whether modern Greeks are worthy of their heritage was raised again. The arrival of a group of French students only made things worse. They were accompanied by a French teacher of ancient Greek who brings students to visit ancient Greek archaeological sites every week. The group of French students were seen with a lot of sympathy by the Greek press, which started praising the teacher’s and the students’ zeal for the ancient Greek heritage, and juxtaposing it to the shameful face Greeks showed internationally. When, after some days, the guards gave way and opened the site for the students the newspapers responded in a festive, triumphal way. Paraskeví Katimertzí, a journalist in the newspaper Ta Néa, quoted the positive remarks of the students and their teacher, e.g. ‘They would not open the Louvre for the students. But in Greece you do not work against tourism’ or ‘I had hoped the site would open, because in general Greeks have a big heart. I have
known Greece for thirty-two years. I adore it. I struggle for Greece’. Katimertzí closes her article by writing:

Outside the fence of the site the students are gathered around [the teacher] Mr. De Neville, who takes a paper out of his file and starts reciting: it is the ‘Prayer on the Acropolis’ of Ernest Renan (Ta Nέa 24/2/97).

This is one of the cases where local attitudes towards Greek heritage are compared to global ones. The guards are heavily criticised when they close the site of the Acropolis. But they also carry the blame for the improper behaviour of Greeks in general towards their antiquities. The guards are the ones with whom foreign tourists come into direct contact and who for them represent part of Greek reality. The guards are thus, not simply employees paid by the hour, but, being Greeks themselves, they also become guardians of the contested Greek heritage in its encounter with the global. They are therefore required to satisfy certain standards. When they decided to open the site for the students, the positive aspects of the Greeks were praised: the French would have never opened the Louvre for the students, an insight which proves that deep inside the Greeks have a big heart and above all moral and social obligation (filotimo). By opening the Acropolis they allow their gods to rise again and to be adored, through a prayer conceived by a Frenchman in the past and addressed by some of his descendants – the French group – today.

Whilst in older times guards were not required to have received secondary school education, things have changed now and the job has become upgraded. For many, this fact has worsened the attitudes of guards towards their responsibilities. As an archaeologist said to me:

I believe that it is not a good idea to consider the major asset of the candidate to have completed secondary school. Those who have finished secondary school do not intend to become guards. [On the contrary] the older ones took it on their honour to become guards and they loved antiquities much more.

Another archaeologist blamed the fact that, while before it was archaeologists who decided who should be allowed to become a guard, now it was the Ministry [of Culture] that decides. This has made the guardian’s job part of the civil service. In fact, as the same archaeologist explained, ‘today guards are simply people who want

to find a placement anywhere, any job. Through the politics of favouritism, they are promised to be transferred into another job inside the ministry at some later stage, so they use the guard’s position as a stepping stone to a better job’. As further evidence for her argument, the archaeologist mentioned that – although guards are offered seminars aiming at instructing them how to guard antiquities and of their meaning – they still display a total indifference, as do many public workers in Greece. This statement goes together with what a tourist guide said, namely that the real problem is not the guards in particular, but the low level of modern Greeks’ conscientiousness in general, especially those working in the public sector. An ex-éforos of the Acropolis said:

They replaced the good old chief-guard with the head of the union of the whole Greece. As the syndicalist has the right to be absent, I did not have any chief guard at all. And all guards considered him their protector and you could not say a word to them, because they would say ‘you are not our boss’. All discipline has been destroyed, and I find this horrible. Their union is very powerful. They are something like 3,000 professionals and they blackmail, e.g. that they will close the Acropolis. In contrast, the technicians and marble workers work with love and passion for antiquities.

In the quotation above, the union representing the self-interests of the guards is juxtaposed to the group of those ‘old good guards’ who really loved the site and associated themselves with it, therefore demonstrating the responsibility required for the guarding of national treasures. In that respect, the guards’ job is considered exactly like the archaeologists’, technicians’ and marble workers’ jobs as not simply an occupation providing for one’s livelihood, but a national responsibility to which the guards do not respond. This kind of ‘pure’ love, free from union interests and irrelevant of education, is considered the only one that can drive a genuine care of the national heirlooms, and therefore the only appropriate one. A historian recalled his experience when he visited an exhibition at the National Gallery in Athens. Although the exhibition did not involve classical antiquities, it still displayed items in which Greeks may feel proud, namely paintings by El Greco – a painter of Greek origin, but of international fame. The historian blamed the attitude of the guards for similar reasons:

There were two guards, who were absorbed in a discussion between them for more than twenty minutes. I said to them: ‘I’m sorry, are there any guards at all around? One of them answered: ‘Why do you ask?’ ‘Because I don’t see any’ I responded. ‘We are the guards’ he said. So I told him: ‘But
for the last half hour you have not given a damn about what is going on in here'. He then became aggressive: 'Did you come to see the exhibition or to criticise us?' I said: 'I came to visit the exhibition and to criticise you.'

If guards are conceived also as ‘guardians’ of the Greek heritage, it is not surprising that they were often criticised by the people I talked to, for not doing their job properly, for the inappropriate ways they behave and stand while on duty. The historian quoted above complained that the guards were too fierce and they scared him – and not just him. ‘They are the front-men, when one goes to see the antiquities’ he said ‘and what visitors see is unshaved people, aggressive, not at all smiling...’

Another archaeologist was describing a photo of a female guard at the museum of Rhodes, in front of the grave stele of Krito and Timarista slumped on the chair, with her shoes thrown to one side. The archaeologist did not fail to point out that it was a tourist who had taken that photo. This indicates the fear of the bad image that Greeks might give abroad, especially in relation to their ideal ancestors (see for example the contrast between Krito, Timarista and the female guard). The juxtaposition between modern and ancient Greeks as well as between the treating of classical antiquity on a local and global level is a topic that often occurs. In an a column of Kathimerini (9/6/96), the journalist Marfa Karavia writes:

Many guesses have been made about the relationship between museum guards and the treasures they look after, about the hours of loneliness and silence, and mostly, about the magic radiance of the antiquities, especially when you live with them for eight whole hours a day. There has been no clear answer. It is unknown if some mystic addiction is added to the plain responsibility of the guards. This view, however, is supported by the ecstatic look of guards in foreign museums, who reply in a low voice like in a church, with an expression of recollection and deep devoutness, always with a hint of pride and tender intimacy for the ancient works when you ask them for some information. Greek reality dissolves such spells. It intrudes in a sweeping way under the form of a loud political chat, jokes, stretching and boredom, accompanied with hanging around which has nothing to do with the necessary discrete watching of visitors, but with the [Greek] national sport of killing time. In general, with the obvious and unbearable misery of the Greeks who are obliged to work and who find ways out even when their job is the guarding of sacred sites.

Karavia here juxtaposes the superior meaning of classical antiquities with the inferior behaviour of modern Greek guards, the magic radiance of the ancient masterpieces with the dry modern Greek reality. The focus of criticism is the public workers’
attitude in Greece (dimosio-ipallilismos). It is widely known that many public workers have got their posts through political bribery and that they have chosen the public sector as a secure post, not requiring any initiative or creativity. Thus, it is the ideal field for exercising what Karavía terms the ‘national sport of killing time’. For her, not only is the worst face of modern Greece contrasted to the grandeur of classical antiquity, but it comes as an irony that representatives of this face are called to guard antiquities. It seems to her that these are two separate worlds and that the only link between them is the authority the second has over the first one. The situation is once more viewed within a framework of comparison between the way Greek heritage is treated on a local and on a global level. Foreigners prove to be more able to receive the almost metaphysical messages that antiquities transmit, while the Greek guards treat them through the prism of an ordinary job. These attitudes, however, are expressed not only as exclusively belonging to the guards. Karavía in the same article goes on describing her personal experience from a visit to the national archaeological museum of Athens:

The other day I was watching a mother who was anxious that her two kids might raise the tone of their voice. I compared her effort to whisper in order to conscientiously advise to the tone of the guards’ voices, who were joking together. I was watching the elderly couple commenting on the exhibits of a glass case in a low voice [and I compared them] to the angry complaints of a woman who had been employed to watch over the irrefutable evidence of our long-lasting history, with her equally angry colleague. My thoughts were interrupted by two young women who entered the evocatively lighted rooms were the Aidonia treasure is presented coolly, i.e. with impudence. They had a look around and they exclaimed: ‘What are these? Ah!..little beads…’ and they turned their backs to the masterpieces of miniature art […] One thinks of those who rushed to collect these objects in one evening, before the touch of the archaeological mattock, in order to sell them in cold blood abroad. Their deed seems to be a continuation and result of our deep and unabridged alienation from our country, regardless of how often we refer to the clichés of ‘cultural heritage’, ‘tradition’, ‘Greekness’ and ‘roots’. As a confirmation, I heard the nervous sound of a guard’s string of beads [komboloi] who was hanging around […] A guard with a string of beads! In no time some radio, some bouzouki - low-voiced in the beginning – will cheer up that ancient lady, Egiso […] Further down another guard made paper aeroplanes and throws them to his colleagues: ‘Don’t you talk and laugh in your job? When we are on strike you accuse us. When we work here overtime you criticise us. You are obsessed with guards. And on

Dimosio-ipallilismos and patronage are well-known and much discussed aspects of the Greek bureaucratic state and Greek politics (Herzfeld 1992; Campbell 1964; Papataxiáris 1990; Komninú 1990; see Gilmore 1982 for a comparative approach).
the top we are lowly paid. But for the sorry state of the museum you say nothing. You are afraid to go against archaeologists.'

The guard's comment gives Karavia the opportunity to criticise the dust on the museum exhibits and the latter's inefficient display before she concludes:

All alone and blue are the gods, the heroes, the ideals of beauty that reside in the neoclassical building [the archaeological museum] of Patisson Street. They might need the stroke of the plectrum [peníá – implying the bouzouki music] after all.

Despite the generalisations that are made in the quoted texts about the guards being indifferent and behaving in an unruly fashion, we do not know for sure whether they would behave differently if they were divested from their role as public sector employees. In fact one could say that the guards do not deny or question the national importance of antiquities. The nature of their job obliges them to carry the load of classical heritage on their backs, even as they want the right to treat their work as an ordinary job.

The indifference of the guards may be translated in terms of the inappropriate way they are often dressed. ‘Indecent’ dressing is seen exactly like the nudity of Nelly’s photos and of foreign tourists. They both lack ‘respect’: ‘In earlier times’, Lydia said, guards used to wear their uniforms. Men used to wear a gray-blue suit and so did women. Now, however, they do not want to wear it anymore. Also they refuse to wear identity disks, like they do in museums all over the world, because they say that various people might use their name to blackmail them or to sue them for not having behaved decently etc. They also say it is a matter of personality, which is offended by wearing a uniform. And you see them being dressed awfully… how can the visitor then distinguish them or even respect them?

Bourdieu (1977), in his exploration of the relationship between structures and the ‘habitus’, discusses the role of ‘bodily hexis’. It is through their bodies that people embody the structures around them and make themselves part of the world in which they belong. The values of their cultures are ‘given body’, are ‘made body’ through ‘injunctions such as “stand up straight” or “don’t hold your knife in your left hand”’ (ibid: 94). According to Bourdieu ‘bodily hexis is political mythology realised, embodied, turned into a permanent disposition, a durable manner of standing, speaking, and thereby of feeling and thinking’. The encounter with classical
antiquities requires a certain attitude also translated in terms of behaviour and dress code. In the guards’ case their behaviour and way of dressing is interpreted as evidence for their indifference and, thus, their unsuitability for something that is not an ordinary job but a patriotic service.

What we have here, however, should be seen under the prism of a more general identity problem. Herzfeld’s discussion of Greek identity as one consisting of Hellenism and Romiossíni is not only a distinction between the Classical and Byzantine pasts. As he has explained (1987), although Romiossíni might be a mark of intimacy, it can also mark a ‘polluted’ vision of modern Greece linked with Turkishness and the stereotypes of the Oriental as lacking organisation and self-control. It can also be a metaphor of the Greek state’s bureaucracy and inefficiency. The discussion of the guards’ behaviour and their attitude in general is seen as such an example. The distinction between the ‘polluted’ Oriental and the ‘pure’ Hellene should be seen as part of the contest between local and global Hellenism as appropriated by the West. The obsession with the fact that ‘the others’ show a greater appreciation of ‘our’ heritage is driven by the fear that ‘we’ are running the danger of losing ‘our’ rights over it. This fear reflects the feeling Greeks have towards the foreign presence in their country as a presence which decided even the very existence of the Greek state and which also decided and decides on what is ‘clean’ and what is ‘polluted’ Greek culture. It also reflects indignation against the state, which does not seem to be able to materialise the Greek interests. The words of Eléni Bística, journalist in Kathimerini (5/5/96), work as evidence for this argument:

Locked up in the Museum of Olympia, the guards on strike were smoking like chimneys under the ancient marbles, with Hermes of Praxiteles and Nike of Paeonios floating in the void of indifference for anything else apart from the syndicalist demands.

After referring to the results such an attitude has for Greek tourism, she concludes:

Only we can cast such discredit on our country. A foreign journalist and writer […] said that the only solution is to bring a charge in the European court! We will see that as well – to have our right to manage our ancient heritage taken from our hands. Hold on Parthenon, Knossos, Olympia, Lindos, Sandorini – have patience. Maybe some dignity – this great unknown of our days – might be found in the Ministry of Culture.
The cigarettes of the indifferent guards on strike who only thought of their self-interests smoked and ‘polluted’ the white ancient marbles. The reaction of the foreign writer represents the threat of losing the contested local heritage and the fear that, once the issue of maltreating antiquities reaches the European court, the distribution of power guarantees the loss of the game. Hellenism is global after all and once more the ‘inefficient Greek state’ will be the big loser.

Víron Polídoras, a former government press representative (Néa Dimokratía) and a member of the Greek Parliament today, writes about the 1st of May when he decided to go with his kids to the Acropolis and found it closed (Apogevmatini 2/5/96):

In the entrance a very unpleasant surprise was waiting for us. A cold shower. A disappointment. The door was closed. Something broke, cracked inside. We froze. We were looking at each other. The eyes of my kids, a huge ‘why’. And I was feeling guilty before those eyes. I looked around. Then I saw hundreds of faces, mirrors of the same feelings. Disappointment, indignation, anger, fury, disgust against those who had stolen from them what was most valuable: the dream. [...] I could see British phlegmatically shaking their heads with rightful contempt. Germans talking – swearing loudly. Italians laughing with sarcasm and swearing with gestures. Japanese went into a huddle [...] in order to explain the phenomenon. They probably failed. Americans saying in all tones the ‘F-word’ followed by the word Greeks and another four letter word (s.t.). Two Africans in their traditional gowns were (in vain) seeking a policeman. [...] Inside the guardhouse I see three employees. One of them recognises me. I ask: why is it closed? He replies: because it is. I ask him to explain why what the label says, namely that on bank holidays the site is open from 10.00 until 2.30, is not adhered to. He says something like ‘The 1st of May is not a bank holiday. It is a strike’. I was looking at him and I was feeling sorry for his political education. [...] An Albanian (as he introduced himself) with a little girl, Anna-Maria, recognised me and he asked me to take a picture with me. His wife from Northern Epirus was crying because the Acropolis was closed. [...] I looked up at the Parthenon: ‘Our Athena, goddess of wisdom, give us some of it’, I prayed. Further down, Protopappas of GSEE were having a speech to some 500 supporters of the guards [ergatopatéres] about the Labour Day and Greek society...Under the closed Acropolis (emphases in the original).

It is not clear to what extent the strong emotions expressed in Polídoras’ words are personal, or whether the article was also politically motivated as it might have been intended to increase the public’s disappointment with the government’s handling of the strike. Nevertheless, even in the latter case, he would have been playing to existing public sentiment. However, the same rhetoric could have been employed by
the government itself with a different aim, namely to increase pressure on the striking guards.

Although I have based this section on interpretations of the guards’ behaviour it would be very interesting to hear the guards’ point of view – a discourse that this research has left out. I did not talk to any guards, but I found the head of the guards’ syndicate response regarding their tactic to close first of all the Acropolis site for contesting their claims very interesting (Eleftherotipia 14/2/97):

Do not think that we close down the Acropolis light-heartedly. The criticism we receive [should] have two recipients. It is us, who do not have any other way to react, and the government that does not want to hear.

Through his almost apologetic tone he accepts the discourse about the high importance of the Acropolis, only he tries to use it in a way to attack the government and achieve his claims. All the public agents are therefore able to use the same discourse accepting the importance of the accessibility of the Acropolis to the public. The only difference is who they blame for the strike. This multiple use of the Acropolis' sacredness is an issue that will occupy us in greater detail in the following section.

VI.G. THE DISCOURSE OF PURITY AND POLLUTION AS A FORM OF RESISTANCE

Ucko, in his foreword to an edited volume titled Sacred Sites, Sacred Places (1994: xviii), has noted that sacred places can at any moment be vested with an identity which does not involve only the supernatural sphere, but also ‘the power of social self-definition and personal self-identity’. In fact, sacredness is a discourse which can arise as part of an effort to differentiate oneself, as an urge to project one’s identity in relation or in reaction to ‘the other’.

In an article titled ‘The Acropolis/Greece is in danger’, the leftist intellectual magazine Epitheorisi Téhnis denounces the establishment of NATO-bases in Greece:

Before entering any sacred site, ancient Greeks used to leave their weapons outside the entrance. War, disaster, or any armed threat had to remain outside the gates of the temples. But in the sacred site called Greece this principle is not kept anymore. Weapons pollute the immunity of the sacred
Acropolises. The danger is great and immediate. It is not focused on the specific Acropolis of Athens and it was not created recently. It was born at the moment the first foreign base intruded upon the sacred site of our country. [...] It does not matter whether the bases are outside the limited site of the Acropolis. Yes, they may not be on the Acropolis, but they are in Crete and in other parts of mainland Greece and Greek islands. And in this land, no matter where you build a base, you will find an Acropolis right next to it. (ID: 132).

The Acropolis is presented as Greece writ small and the range of its sacredness covers all Greece. The Acropolis is Greece, therefore its sacredness transcends the particular limited site and expands to every corner of the Greek land. The Acropolises the writer refers to are not the Acropolises of other ancient sites, but a metaphorical vessel for everything Greek. It seems that the discourse of sacredness is activated by foreign intrusion. It is the obtrusive NATO military bases in Greece that provoke the writer’s reaction and the juxtaposition of ideals, such as the sacredness of the site, which coincides with Greekness per se. It is this reasoning that allows him to use the ancient custom of leaving one’s arms outside sacred sites exclusively against the foreign military presence. Greek weapons do not seem to violate the Acropolis’ sacredness as they do not violate Greek territory. We have encountered similar reactions throughout this thesis, whereby the sacredness of the Acropolis gives the rise to resistance against foreign elements. For example, the ‘purification program’ that took place on the Acropolis, or the removal of the swastika from the Acropolis. Both activities were part of the effort to emphasise or to maintain the sacredness of the site before the threat of the foreign ‘polluting’ presence (Figure 59). The concept of sacredness however, is not necessarily only a Greek reaction to foreign presence or authority. It can be a form of resistance from within against the state itself.

A case in point is the reaction of inhabitants of areas around the Acropolis to the environmental and traffic problems in these areas. In August 1996, the cultural environmental society Acropolis submitted a petition, signed by the inhabitants of the areas, asking for a curfew on heavy vehicles in the area and for the placement of relevant traffic signs. The problem remained unresolved. Thus, in the summer of the same year, the society threatened that if their requests were not satisfied by the 25th of August they would proceed with other actions: they would address the Public Prosecutor, and inform all international organisations (the EU, the Office of Citizens
Protection of the EU, UNESCO, etc.) (*Apoyevmatimí tis Kiriakís* 18/8/96; *Apoyevmatimí* 8/8/96). The head of the society complained that

Twenty-four hours a day, hundreds of heavy vehicles [...], as well as countless passenger cars, taxis, motorbikes etc. have made the lives of the people who live around the Acropolis unbearable. And of course, the thick air pollution injures the ancient marbles of the sacred rock in a criminal way (*Apoyevmatimí tis Kiriakís* 18/8/1996).

Figure 59: Visual representations criticising the hegemonic role of the U.S. in Greece. Bottom: Cartoon by Dimitris on the occasion of Bill Clinton’s visit to Athens. R. Burns, the U.S. ambassador to Greece, asks the heads of the various Greek political parties, who feature in the shape of luxury cigars (an aside on the Lewinsky scandal): ‘Are you ready?’ They reply ‘for what, Mr. Burns?’

Similar reactions were voiced also by several others, who treated the specific problem of the inhabitants of the area always together with the moral issue of the Acropolis’ pollution. Spiros Karafís, a columnist of *Kathimerini* writes:

[This fact] apart from insulting the aesthetics of the unique [Acropolis’] landscape provokes a severe traffic problem. Above all, it creates serious
problems – because of the pollution and the vibrations – for the monument as well as for other archaeological sites. The inhabitants of the area complain. However, for months now bureaucracy sends them from one person in charge to another. (Kathimerini Sp. Karalis 9/8/96).

The issue brought up by the inhabitants of the area around the Acropolis also provoked discussions about the wider burning issues of Athens, such as the traffic or the air pollution. This ignited several accusations and complaints against Greek state bureaucracy and inefficiency. The inhabitants of the area, basing their claims on the official discourse about the uniqueness and the importance of the Acropolis, got more attention and found more supporters because they associated their demands with the monument.

Such claims by protesters using the official discourse around the Acropolis, and turning it to their advantage in order to make claims or to attack the state, do not just appear in organised form. They can even be made on an individual level as we see in the following example. On September 9th, 1996, a twenty-two-year-old man climbed on the walls of the Acropolis and threatened to jump if the state refused to listen to his claims. The young man – a drug addict according to the journalists who covered the event – accused the police of having beaten him in the past and he was asking, among other things, for compensation from the state (Apoyevmatini 10/9/96). A few days later another thirty-seven-year-old man climbed the scaffoldings set up for the restoration of the Parthenon and threatened to commit suicide. It was the second time in the last two years that he was doing that in order to protest against the hypocrisy of the state. He complained that although the state allowed him to live in an illegally built house on the slopes of the mountain Hymettos, it did not do anything to help him when the house had been swept away by a torrent. Now the man was expecting the state to help him find a new place to live and to be sent to a detoxification programme, as he was also a drug addict. The newspaper in both cases underlined the two men’s behaviour, threatening and swearing, and making the marbles ‘turn red out of embarrassment’ – one of them putting down his pants in front of the cameras – to conclude that ‘we have ridiculed ourselves to the tourists’.

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61 Committing suicide from the rock of the Acropolis has a long history beginning with the legendary suicide of Mary, the young German governess of King George (then heir to the Greek throne), in 1893. Since then several other suicides have followed with a quite notable number around 1925 (e.g. Eléftheron Vima 1/8/1925; 3.8.1925 – I thank Prof. George Margaritis for providing me the relevant newspaper clippings).
The two young men obviously wanted to provoke the state. It was no coincidence that they chose to do so on the Acropolis, knowing that their reaction would be heard from there more than anywhere else. They were two disempowered individuals who empowered themselves by using a highly charged monument. In chapter III, I mentioned another act of suicide, a Greek soldier who wrapped himself in the Greek flag and jumped from the rock when the German troops invaded Athens. That was considered a heroic act, glorifying the Acropolis’ rock, as it was an act of resistance in the name of the Greek nation and compatible with the idea of the Acropolis as embodying the spirit of the nation. On the contrary, the acts of the two young men were considered ‘polluting’, as they were blackmailing and motivated by self-interest.

As Herzfeld has noted (1991: 227) ‘once the rhetoric of national heritage has entered the protesters’ vocabulary, it can be turned to their advantage’. In all three cases discussed above (the reaction to the establishment of NATO-bases in Greece, the response to the environmental and traffic problems of the Acropolis’ area and the suicide threats), the discourse about the Acropolis’ sacredness becomes a political tool incorporated in a wider framework of negotiation of power and resistance to support group or individual claims. These claims become more powerful once addressed in the name of the Acropolis or from the site of the Acropolis.

**VI.H. WHITE – THE COLOUR OF PURITY**

So far we have seen examples of how concepts of sacredness are expressed in relation to the Acropolis site and how they are translated in aesthetic terms. Here I will argue that what epitomises these aesthetics of sacredness and purity is the whiteness of the marbles.

The whiteness of the marbles has a long history, which can be traced back to an era when the West perceived ancient classical Greece as the place where all Platonic ideals resided. Whiteness has been an integral part of the classical aesthetics of sculpture and architecture, which is in tune with the ideals of austerity and simplicity associated with classical Greek art and life. The ‘whiteness’ of the marbles is repeatedly praised, even today, as being in character with the ideals classical antiquity represents. In the following section, I argue that white is used as the colour signifying
purity and it should be seen in association with a series of efforts to keep the Acropolis 'clean' from any alien elements.

The verse of a resistance song, released during the Colonels' dictatorship in 1967-1974 says: 'In these very marbles, bad rust cannot sit'. The verse implies that in a place like Greece, with all its connotations as a cradle of Democracy and Civilisation, a dictatorship is a foreign element and therefore cannot last. It is significant that the imposition of the dictatorship is perceived in aesthetic terms, namely as dark filthy rust, staining the white pure marbles.62

The urge to see the Acropolis restituted in its former glory – and stripped of any elements which distort what it represents – is epitomised in the desire of a ten-year-old student (6th PR):

The Elgin marbles should come back, so that we see the Acropolis richer, as it used to be. I would like to see the Acropolis all white and illuminated as I imagine it.

The way the student perceives the glory of the Acropolis is by imagining it all white and illuminated. This is how he imagines the Acropolis' restituted form.

Given this ideal of whiteness I was not surprised by the mostly negative reactions of the students of all schools, when I told them that the buildings on the Acropolis used to be colourful and I asked them whether they would have liked to see the Acropolis in colours: One of the students said:

The Acropolis multi-coloured [ironically]? It loses all its essence. I think that with the colours it also loses its value. Because, the way it looks now, it shows that it is an old monument (6th PR).

Another student thought that a coloured Acropolis would look 'kitsch and banal' while another one thought that 'it might be nicer in colours, but we have linked all old things with not being that cheerful' (6th PR). Finally, one exclaimed: 'Will we make a clown [flúfi] out of our history?' (5th GR)

What becomes evident from the above is the association of whiteness with seriousness, and the association of seriousness with authority. As we saw earlier, there

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62 The Greek word for rust skuria comes from the ancient Greek skoría, itself deriving from the word skor meaning excrement.
is a need for the Acropolis, and antiquities in general, to be ‘serious’. Patricia Storace, a contemporary American traveller to Greece, reported on the ‘jailer’s facial expression that means authority in Greece’ (Storace 1996: 7-8). Storace continues, commenting on the reaction of a Greek friend of hers who, when he viewed a picture of Franklin Roosevelt, said ‘That face. I can never understand that face, that inane smile’. Storace believes that whilst in the USA smiling is a kind of authority as it represents optimism, invincibility, a mastery of both good and bad fortune, a possession of happiness, in Greece it is ‘a kind of placation, a sign of submission’.  

She also notes that in Greek ‘the verb “to laugh” also means “to deceive”’ and she brings up the example of the facial expressions at passport control at each country. ‘The Americans smile in their booths with an easy self-assurance that enjoyment cannot threaten; the Greeks scowl theatrically, implacably, since a smile is not considered an impressive facial expression, and a male face is meant above all to impress, not to charm’.

Colours are not only considered motley (cf. also the Greek phrase *hrómata ki arómata* – ‘colours and perfumes’ – normally used to imply frivolity), but an alien skin, an artificial body, added to the original, which masks, rather than projects, the spirit of the Acropolis (see also chapter V). As a young Greek lecturer in artificial intelligence, who found the idea of an Acropolis in colours excessive, phrased it: ‘It would be as if you had a nice dessert and you added other things on the top, more whipped cream, more cherries etc.’.

Similar reactions have been caused also by the ‘Son et Lumière’ (Sound and Light) system which has been adopted by the National Tourist Organisation since 1959 during the tourist months in Greece (June-September) (Figure 60). The ‘Sound and Light’, is a show based on lighting effects co-ordinated with a narration, which aim to evoke moments of the monuments’ history. Sound and light performances have been staged in a wide variety of historic settings including the Pyramids of Giza, Versailles etc. (Papageorgiou-Venetas 1994: 377-378). From the beginning, the Acropolis as a subject for Son et Lumière has been quite controversial.

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63 The association of power and authority is wider than what Storace describes. In fact, in the student movement at Yale in 1968, the painting of a portrait of Jesus smiling by an American provoked a public uproar in the USA (Prof. Kalpaxis, personal communication).
In 1959, an art magazine (Zygos 42: 4) criticized the Sound and Light as ‘The phantasmagoric glow of the Acropolis bathed in red, yellow and green glows like the scene of Follie Berger’ and it grieved:

If Pericles was on the Pnyx hill on the evening of the 28th of May and if he saw the deplorable sight of the Acropolis, this is what he would cry: ‘Since everything is condemned to decline, at least, future centuries say about us, that whatever beautiful things we built in this city and whatever remained erect after time’s passing and after the enemy’s rage, we ourselves destroyed through foreign hands’.

In the same year, a left-oriented intellectual magazine made a similar critique (Epitheórisi Téhnis 53-54 (1959): 242):

The motley light and the sounds of Mr. Pávlos Melás – and, unfortunately, of others as well – make the Acropolis and her monuments ‘productive’ for the last one month...for the benefit of a French company which produces records, radios, vacuum cleaners and shaving machines. The instigators of this spectacle apparently thought that the Parthenon and the temple of Apteros Nike do not look so great under the light of the sun and the sky of Attica, or under the moonlight. On the contrary, they thought that, with the motley colors of the footlights, it would become pretty, more imposing, almost like the badly painted settings of a revue. And, indeed, the Parthenon under the caressing of the colored projectors sometimes reminds of
According to the magazine a foreign company of mass-produced goods aspires to beautify the Acropolis. In its efforts to do so it only manages to reproduce an artificial Acropolis which is not in tune with ‘the appropriate’ aesthetics, but is ugly like the Athenian blocks of flats, poor and miserable like Karagiózis’ hut, and scary like an apocalyptic monster.

The critiques developed today, 40 years later, towards the ‘Sound and Light’ show effects do not vary significantly from those expressed on the first year of its establishment. An undergraduate student in economics who went to watch the spectacle with some foreign friends of hers commented:

What a mumbo jumbo that was! I felt embarrassed. It was excessive, not at all modest, and not at all informative either. All that verbal pomposity made the actors’ voices weigh with all the glory of ancient Greece, while at the same time motley red, yellow, and blue lights illuminated the marbles.

For an archaeologist who has worked on the Acropolis the show aggravates the site aesthetically, whilst for several tourist guides the Sound and Light show is simply ‘a tragedy’. A tourist guide (in her 50s today) explained:

I believe that the Sound and Light show does not befit the Greek monuments. The Greek monuments have a clarity, a rationality; this romantic thing – because the Sound and Light show is clearly romantic with all these contrasts… voices, music, etc. – does not fit. In general the Greek reality does not take romanticism. You see the Palace in Rhodes: because it is Medieval or pseudo-Medieval it fits with the Sound and Light show; it fits in Egypt, because it has this mysticism, the unknown, the dark… The Greek landscape, however, does not take it. It is out of date and out of place. It is the monument itself that resists.

The aesthetics of the Acropolis is conceived as plain, austere, clear and white, unable to withstand the ‘weight’ of polychromy. There is, however, a case in which the whiteness of the marbles was not praised at all. The story is the following:

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64 Karagiózis is a poor, bold and hunch-backed Greek shadow theatre protagonist who embodies what are considered as virtues and vices of the Greek folk (see Danforth 1976; 1983; Leigh Fermor 1966; Herzfeld 1987).
VI.I. A CONTEST OVER ‘CLEANLINESS’

In the summer of 1998, William St. Clair, a British historian and intellectual, brought up the issue of the proper guarding of the marbles by the British Museum through his newly published book about the history of the Elgin marbles’ acquisition (1998). He came up with evidence that the technicians of the BM had removed a considerable layer from the marble of the sculptures in their effort to ‘clean up’ the marbles in the 1930s. Apparently, that had happened at the request of Sir Joseph Duveen, the donor of the gallery in which the marbles are exhibited, and was dictated by the aesthetics of that period, praising the whiteness of the marbles. Given that one of the major arguments of the British Museum in its refusal to return the marbles to Greece is the supposed inefficiency of the Greek Archaeological Service in maintaining and guarding them properly, the evidence St. Clair brought to light re-kindled the issue of the return of the Parthenon marbles to Greece in the Greek press. The reddish-brown patina of age, formed by the action of iron oxides on the surface of the marble, was considered ‘natural’ and, therefore, improper to remove (e.g. Ta Néa 9/6/98). Eléni Bistika, a middle-aged journalist of the newspaper Kathimerini, who showed special interest in the issue, wrote that by scraping and rubbing the brownish colour of the marbles, the BM technicians were ‘extinguishing forever the traces of the artist’s burin on the sculpture’. That, according to her, was a sign that it was time for Greece to claim back the Parthenon sculptures which, quoting her words, ‘wait inside the gallery of the ludicrous Duveen, pale and having been deprived of the mantle of time which accompanied them for over 2000 years’ (Kathimerini 14/6/98).

The brownish colour of the patina here represents time and the original artist’s hand, both qualities of the originality of the work of art. The marbles, being deprived of these two qualities, seem to lose their authenticity. In their effort to achieve the ideal whiteness of the Pendelic marble, the British thus destroyed the marbles’ nature. Bistika (Kathimerini 11/6/98) also quotes the words by St. Clair who regrets that one

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65 In a later re-kindling of the issue, Victoria Solomonidis of the Greek embassy described the British comment about severe methods employed by the Greeks themselves for the cleaning of the marbles as ‘a reflection of long-running British arrogance about whether the Greeks are fit to look after their own heritage’ (The Independent 6/11/99).

66 One could compare with the case of Capella Sixtina for similar complaints concerning the cleaning of the Michelangelo paintings. The bright colours that the cleaning set off were seen as incompatible with what was considered until then as the ‘typical palette’ of Michelangelo, and the cleaning was believed to be an intrusion to the works of art extinguishing the artist’s painting brush.
cannot find the familiar brown anymore after the cleaning: ‘Nobody can find a trace of brown [colour] in many sculptures with bare eyes. Only the gray, the pale, [the colour] with no glow’. And, Bistika adds: ‘The gray of sorrow, the pale of expatriation, which demands the glow of truth...’ She also associates the ‘dull’ colours of London with the colour of the marbles in the BM. This idea goes along with the words of the Greek Minister of Culture when he stated that a scientifically documented conservation programme for the marbles is only possible when one bears in mind what the sky of Attica is like, what the colour of the marble of Attica means (Ta Néa 10/6/98).

The whiteness of the marbles in the BM featured as an artificial creation by the British in their eagerness to imitate the original Greek white colour which, however, could not be conceived outside Greece. Moreover, it was believed to be an imposition of the foreign element which destroys the very nature of the marbles. In a cartoon (Figure 61), an antiquities’ guard standing next to ruined ancient columns which are covered with white cloths appears, saying to a tourist: ‘We protect the marbles with British flags, which we washed with bleach in order to wash off the colour that time has printed on the cloth’. Again, the role of a flag is compared with the role of the marbles: by trying to remove the colours that time has imprinted on the British flag we turn it into white, i.e. we deprive it from its very meaning as symbol of Britain; we make it an ordinary white cloth. It is implied that, in the same way, the ‘cleaning’ of the marbles took off ‘their skin’ – the brownish red colour – which represented their historicity and their authenticity/originality. i.e. the traces that (a) the artist’s hand left on them and (b) the traces that the past left on them. The idea of the Greek marbles covered by British flags stands for the British ‘protection’ of the marbles in the BM. Now that the Greek marbles have no skin they are protected with British flags which, however, have become white cloths with no identity. Those who took away the marbles’ skin protect them with meaningless cloths.
Dimtris Kastriotis, columnist in *Kathimerini* (14/11/99), associated the marbles’ cleaning by the BM with another issue that provoked a similarly big outrage in Greece when it became public, namely the receptions that the BM organises occasionally in the room of the Parthenon marbles. He commented:

[The British Museum] could not possibly allow the distinguished revellers to hang about around shabby statues. They had to shine them as much as the floors. What would a well-respected British gentleman think of ancient Greece, if he saw that the famous Pendelic marble does not retain even its colour and if he compared it to the endless shine of the good quality whisky in his glass? As Mr. Hamilton, who apart from a genius must also be a communist, said: ‘Not anyone attends receptions: the clients who prefer the room of the Greek antiquities are major companies, big banks, law companies. The fact that they agree to pay such large amounts of money to rent the room shows their respect for the marbles. We are talking about a certain class of people who know how to behave’.

It becomes obvious that we encounter a case of a politics of colour and aesthetics deciding what is ‘dirty white’ and what is ‘clean white’. Kastriotis, referring to the verse of the resistance song mentioned earlier, wrote (ibid): ‘As is well known, in these marbles ‘bad rust’ does not sit. It seems, however, that once these very marbles leave the country, their decay begins. The question of the marbles’ ownership then...
becomes a feature of their form. When the marbles leave the country of their origin, they lose their original colour, they become fake. What is normally considered as dirty and clean is reversed here. People quoted earlier in this text thought the ideal aesthetic of the marbles was their ‘whiteness’. The insistence that the ‘real’ ancient marbles should be ‘dull’ brown plainly contradicts the normal views. The removal of the marbles’ surface was described as a removal of its very skin. In the same article Kastriotis notes that ‘the BM rubbed the marbles in order to make them white with a passion bigger than the one they demonstrated as world-rulers [...] in whitening up the peoples and the cultures of half of the entire globe’. Race then comes up as an issue in this debate even if in the form of a metaphor. For the West, classical Greece was ‘white and pure’ (cf. Bernal 1987). Modern Greeks, however, could not fit this picture. If they were to meet these ideals they would need to follow the ‘whitening’ ideology of the West and indeed they did absorb the ‘Western Hellenic view’. Here, in a situation of counter-hegemony, the dark skin of the marbles becomes an asset, the valuable mantle of time, and what used to constitute ‘Western’ aesthetics becomes an aesthetics of resistance in the hands of the Greeks.

The whole debate over colour here fits right within the local-global debate. Local resistance to the global involves disavowing earlier ‘local’ positions that were in fact influenced by global pronouncements. Once more, the issue of the Parthenon marbles and the protests against their ‘cleansing’ rekindled the wider political and historical issues that they always do: the foreign powers’ involvement in Greek matters and matters of national honour. Even in this case, Western discourse becomes localised and provides argumentation against the West: Bístika for example, as well as many other journalists or non-journalists, repeatedly quote St. Clair’s words to back their argument. An archaeologist complained to me that the 1930s cleaning of the Parthenon marbles have acquired, while in British hands, with the British weather and colours has formed part of another Western European discourse. Kalpaxis (1997) refers to an article under the title ‘From the Acropolis to the British Museum. The abduction of the Parthenon frieze by Lord Elgin’ published in the German newspaper Frankfurter Zeitung on 23/7/1939. The columnist after having described the story of the removal of the Parthenon marbles by Elgin, describes also the destruction of some sculptures’ surface as resulted from the inept cleaning with caustic acid in the beginning of 1939. The columnist criticises the display of the sculptures in a room with ‘dirty-red’ walls, where the sculptures have attained the brownish colour of the London fog. On the contrary, she says, the Pergamon museum in Berlin is bright and the display of its antiquities perfect. ‘Those who worked on the Pentelic marble, the surface of which is so thin and so vulnerable, surely did not destine it for London’s smog’. As Kalpaxis notes (ibid: 64) the conclusion of the columnist is far from suggesting the removal of the sculptures from London. In the end of the article Elgin is exculpated from the charge as ‘an honest day-dreamer, who was questing the land of the

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67 Even the comparison of the colour the Parthenon marbles have acquired, while in British hands, with the British weather and colours has formed part of another Western European discourse. Kalpaxis (1997) refers to an article under the title ‘From the Acropolis to the British Museum. The abduction of the Parthenon frieze by Lord Elgin’ published in the German newspaper Frankfurter Zeitung on 23/7/1939. The columnist after having described the story of the removal of the Parthenon marbles by Elgin, describes also the destruction of some sculptures’ surface as resulted from the inept cleaning with caustic acid in the beginning of 1939. The columnist criticises the display of the sculptures in a room with ‘dirty-red’ walls, where the sculptures have attained the brownish colour of the London fog. On the contrary, she says, the Pergamon museum in Berlin is bright and the display of its antiquities perfect. ‘Those who worked on the Pentelic marble, the surface of which is so thin and so vulnerable, surely did not destine it for London’s smog’. As Kalpaxis notes (ibid: 64) the conclusion of the columnist is far from suggesting the removal of the sculptures from London. In the end of the article Elgin is exculpated from the charge as ‘an honest day-dreamer, who was questing the land of the
marbles was well-known – he himself had made it known to the Greek Ministry of Culture, but it was St. Clair who had to bring up the issue for the Greek world to revolt. If this is true, it should not be surprising: a British discourse against the British Museum is considered more powerful because it is British. It is a discourse originating from the enemy's camp, which is appropriated and used by the protesters.

VI.J. THE PURSUIT OF AUTHENTICITY AND THE REUNION OF TELOS AND ORIGIN

The discussion about the cleaning of the marbles that took place in the Greek newspapers illustrates some perceptions about what constitutes the particular qualities of a work of art, such as the Acropolis. Both materiality of ancient artifacts and the seal of authenticity they convey, renders them able to offer immediate, and tangible, contact with the past. Authenticity is a major factor in the aesthetic appreciation of a work of art. The case of the marbles' cleaning makes clear that it is not only recent additions that make something inauthentic, but also removals (e.g. the patina of age). The authenticity of the experience of contacting the 'glorious', national past cannot allow any interference, which might pollute the result aesthetically and metaphorically. The aesthetic appreciation of the Acropolis derives, to a great degree, from its 'purity' which is reversed when it is 'polluted' by elements considered as alien (e.g. the Nazi flag or the more recent buildings as mentioned earlier). Given the association between high art and high civilisation it is evident that any influence on the first will affect the second. Therefore, any interference which might 'stain' the high aesthetics of the Acropolis, and, as a consequence, the values that it represents, is condemned.

As we saw earlier, authenticity is a concept that helps one make statements about who one is in relation to others not only in social, but also in national terms. In the previous chapter, we saw that the 'authentic' Acropolis is defined in relation to its 'inauthentic', commodified copies. Authenticity, however, is not necessarily only linked with the appearance of mechanically produced commodities with which we Greeks with his soul'. So is the British museum, as the whole event is described as 'an accident for which the BM cannot be reproached'. The defence of a mutually accepted ideology, the one which nominates the Powers of the West as the only legal heirs of the ancient world prevails even over their sharp disputes which can occur among its conveyors.
began to distinguish between the unique and the replaceable. In the case described above, it is defined in relation to the forgery the British committed on the authentic monument itself in their effort to achieve a whiteness which was, in fact, fake. It was suggested that in their hands even the original became inauthentic, because they tried to impose on it an ‘alien’ authenticity. The ‘real’ whiteness of the marbles could only be found under the ‘Greek sun’ and the ‘landscape of Attica’. Once removed from their real context, the marbles could not display the same whiteness, which could only be imitated but never achieved. The issue of authenticity, both in this case as well as in the case of commodification, is clearly linked with the issue of ‘legitimate’ ownership. By trying to make the Parthenon marbles real and authentic the British only managed to make them fake and inauthentic. The same idea resides in the principles of the restoration held by Greek archaeologists.

In contrast to other archaeological schools of thought, the dominant policy of Greek archaeologists regarding restoration works on archaeological monuments is traditionally that of minimal intervention. As early as 1956, *Epitheórisi Téhnis* (D (1956) 22: 323) quoted a text by Anastásios Orlándos (architect and archaeologist, professor at the University at Athens and the Technical University and Director of the ancient and historical monuments restoration program between 1917-1958), referring to the restoration of the Stoa of Attalos by the American Archaeological School at Athens:

> I wonder whether I should call it restoration or reconstruction; Because here in Greece what we consider restoration of a monument is placing back to their original place all its pieces without exception – even the smallest ones – adding only a few new ones which are necessary to structurally support the placing of the old ones […].

The writer of the article in the magazine comments:

> But what did the Americans do? Not only did they not use the original parts of the monument properly, but they even denied to incorporate the [ancient] building inscription [in the restored building] giving ‘some poor archaeological reasons’, against the totally opposite opinion of the [Greek] Archaeological Council. […] Probably so that all the … glory is taken by the American sponsors as if they were the Attalides. But, apart from the deficiencies of the restoration, distortions also took place because of the purpose of the work as museum. As a result, big windows were opened on the East side in the place of the original ones which were very narrow. The length and the whiteness of the work is another indicator of the nouveau-
riche mentality, so that Orlándos rightly is afraid that ‘it might depressingly compete in length and in stunning whiteness with Theseion, which rises on the other side of the Agora’.

The archaeologists to whom I talked during fieldwork had similar beliefs about the restoration of monuments. Those beliefs were held also by non-archaeologists. Most of those whom I asked whether they would have liked the Parthenon fully restored said either that they like it in its present form or that they would only like it fully restored if (a) they were absolutely sure that it is only authentic pieces that have been used and (b) the pieces are in exactly the right place. ‘The Acropolis can not withstand any fake elements’ a business employee stated. Keeping the site authentic is very important. Any recent addition is alien to the monument and adulterates its meaning. As we saw in the previous chapter, any intervention on the original form is considered menacing to the spirit of the site.

Rajan (1985: 4), comparing the idea of ‘ruin’ to the idea of ‘the unfinished’, argues that, while the unfinished does not invite completion, the aspiration when viewing a ruin is ‘the union of telos and origin’. He also argues that ‘the relation of the part to the whole, the consciousness of loss, and the endeavour of retrieval which characterise our contemplation of survivals are singularly prominent in the way the ruin is viewed’ (ibid). In fact all these elements do exist in the way the Acropolis is viewed. The Acropolis is indeed linked with the origin and telos of the Greek nation, with its losses, and its aspirations for regeneration. The restoration works on the Acropolis could thus be seen as a metaphor for the Greek nation’s efforts to restore its ancient glory. This longing towards ‘the union of telos and origin’ sounds very similar to the (Orthodox) religious quest of the union with the divine, which is both telos and origin, as God made Man according to his own image. Viewing ruins entails something transcendental. It is like a religious situation, where you have to imagine a God whom you cannot see. ‘Imagination’, McFarland says, ‘transcends reality’. He notes that thrusting aside the barriers of the sensible world ‘gives it a feeling of being unbounded; and that removal is thus a presentation of the infinite’ (ibid: 45). ‘The logic of incompleteness is thus ultimately the logic of infinity’ (ibid: 28), inherent also in religion. The association between ruin and the divine is well-depicted in the words of Mme de Staël who writes in the spirit of the Romantic ‘sentiment des ruines’: ‘A broken column, a bas-relief half ruined, some stones linked in the indestructible
workmanship of ancient architects, reminds you that there is an eternal power, a
divine spark in man' (ibid: 14).

It is this feeling of 'eternal power', deriving from the traces of centuries cast in the
ancient marbles, that renders the Acropolis a powerful metaphor for the imagining of
the Greek nation's history. The damage done to the monuments, which is not only the
outcome of natural wear through time, but the result of violent interference (e.g. the
sawing off the sculptures by Elgin or the destruction of the Parthenon by Morosini's
bomb) stands as a real wound on the 'sorely-tried' Greek national body. It is
associated with historical moments and experiences, such as the foreign hegemony or
the long-term Ottoman occupation. The Acropolis’ persistence throughout the
centuries comes as a promise that the Greek spirit remains intact throughout history.
The young 6th PR student said that he likes 'to imagine the Acropolis all white and
illuminated' (p. 188). It is a vision of the Acropolis in past and future times that the
half-ruined form of the Acropolis allows him to picture. On the other hand, the
concept of sacredness, linked with the Parthenon as a temple where the Greek soul
resides, does not define only local and global relationships. It is also one that brings
together the two facets of Greek identity, Hellenism and Romiossíni, as described by
Herzfeld. It becomes, as Yiórgos said, the magical world where the two civilisations,
the Byzantine and the classical, meet. It is where the Greeks see a glorious past and
envisage a promising future.
CHAPTER VII. CONCLUSIONS

I woke with this marble head in my hands;
It exhausts my elbows and I don’t know where to put it down.
It was falling into the dream as I was coming out of the dream
so our lives became one and it will be very difficult for it to disunite again.

I look at the eyes: neither open nor closed
I speak to the mouth, which keeps trying to speak
I hold the cheeks, which have broken through the skin.
I don’t have any more strength.

My hands disappear and come toward me mutilated.

George Seféris, Mithistorima
Translated by Keeley and Sherrard (1967).

In Greece it is often said that the Greek nation had been asleep during the entire Ottoman occupation, waking up again in the early 19th century, with the War of Independence and the consequent establishment of the Greek state. When the Greek nation ‘woke up’, however, it found itself carrying the weight of a heritage valued highly by ‘the West’. The classical Greek heritage became a blessing and a curse at the same time: on the one hand, it rendered modern Greeks what the 19th century historian Zambelios has termed ‘les enfants gâtés de l’histoire’ (‘the spoiled children of history’) (Skopetéa 1988: 11). Modern Greece became the heir of ancient Greece, and classical heritage became the means through which the Greeks could come closer to their European counterparts. On the other hand, it was this same heritage that reminded the West of how different contemporary Greeks were from their classical ancestors. Classical antiquity was considered as the distinctive mark of Western identity; a measure of cultural difference and superiority over the ‘barbarian’ peoples of the New World and of the Orient which the Western civilisation ‘discovered’ and, consequently, tried to ‘civilise’. The Greek people was considered as one of those and it is well-known how ‘civilisers’ repeatedly expressed their discontent for Greece not being its ‘real’ self, not corresponding to the idealised image they had shaped for it (Andreádis 1989: 60; Simópulos 1984). There is a tale about a poor man who
suddenly found himself in possession of fabulous riches. He had always dreamt of that moment and, although the gift was beyond his expectations, it eventually became an unbearable load under the constant fear of its potential loss. The heritage with which the Greek state was endowed has been accompanied by the anxiety that modern Greeks have to keep it and, most importantly, to prove themselves worthy of it. It represents a perfected ‘civilisation’, a yardstick, which has always been there reminding them of what they should be.

Seféris’ nightmare about the exhausting weight of the marble head expresses the unease which the weight of classical heritage creates, and which has resided in the Greek national consciousness burdening the Greeks’ present lives.

Figure 62: Cartoon by Státhis. According to Kathimerini it should be interpreted as ‘The Man loaded with the mythical time that he himself created’ (source: Kathimerini 4/1/00).

An equally pessimistic spirit is conveyed in a cartoon by Státhis described by Kathimerini (4/1/00) as ‘the Man loaded with the mythical time that he himself created’ (Figure 62). I am not aware of whether Stathis specifically refers to the relationship of the Greeks with their classical past, although this is very likely, given his recurrent engagement with the issue. In any case, if we read his cartoon from this perspective, we will find that he introduces a new dimension into this relationship. Although the cartoon indicates the oppressive role of classical heritage by depicting
the Greek nation kneeling on all fours in order to carry this heritage on its back, it also suggests that classical heritage is not simply a foreign body imposed on the Greeks from the outside, but that it has become an integral part of the Greek national body – its back and its hind legs in the cartoon. It does not mutilate their hands as Seféris suggested, but it enables them to walk.

Although the classical past can undeniably be oppressive for modern Greece, it can also be empowering, a telos to aspire to. It can be both a burden and a weapon in negotiations of power, within Greece and on an international level. The Acropolis is a case in point. The shadow it casts over Athens and Greece has an animistic power, a spirit that haunts and guards them at the same time. In the last years of Otto’s kingship, one of the fighters in the War of Independence narrated his dream to General Makriyánns: an old man revealed to him that Makriyánns must go to a church. In the church’s foundations he would find an [ancient] stone with engraved capital letters (grάmmατα kefaliakά). As long as the Greeks held on to this stone and the foreigners did not take it from them, the country had nothing to fear (Andreádis 1989: 13). In the fighter’s dream, classical antiquity thus played the role of a talisman for Greece. As we have seen throughout this thesis, this view is not exclusively Makriyánns’. The Acropolis occurs repeatedly as an asset, inalienable wealth that Greeks possess, a point of reference from which they can draw strength in difficult times.

The Acropolis’ site does not simply represent a specific period of a remote past, detached from the Greeks’ present lives. On the contrary, it relates also to more recent and more personal experiences, which create a familiarity not exclusively linked with an archaeological or historical knowledge of the classical past. In fact, the Acropolis plays a primordial role in domesticating historical experience. It is, as we saw, a metaphor of Hellenism’s history in time and space. Thus, foreign occupation or hegemony, national losses and sufferings, but also national reinstatement and restitution find their expression in the form of the Acropolis’ history, like for example

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68 In that respect, the beginning of the anthem of a school in the Makriyánns area (on the south foot of the Acropolis) is revealing: The students sang the anthem until 1963 and in the first verses they addressed their school: ‘Under the light of the Parthenon my school...’ (I thank the architect Ms Julia Kostaki for the information). A more personal example is that of a friend who was brought up in the same area. After his success in entering the University his father, in his enthusiasm, exclaimed ‘It could not have been otherwise, given that you were conceived under the shadow of the Parthenon’.
in its mutilation, occupation, but also its restoration and above all its ‘timelessness’. The ‘timelessness’ of the ancient ruins represents the Acropolis’ — and by extension the Greek nation-state’s — existence despite history’s vicissitudes. It signifies their continuity in time, as well as their unity in space.

The Acropolis also merges opposing aspects of Greek identity, such as those of Hellenism and Romiossíni as described by Herzfeld. The transformation of the caves on the Acropolis’ slopes into little churches, Kira-Thodóra who made the sign of the cross in front of the Parthenon or Yiórgos who went to the Acropolis on Good Fridays to listen to the churches’ bells are all examples of how the Acropolis accommodates those features of Romiossíni related to Byzantine Orthodox Christianity. On the other hand, the calcination of the monuments’ marbles associated with the air-pollution or the ‘general crisis’ of the Greek state alludes to those features of Romiossíni related with backwardness and lack of progress. In one of the issues of Ta Athinaíká one of the members of ‘The Society of the Athenians’ in her praise of the ‘beauty of Greece’ (literal and metaphorical) considered the Acropolis as the place where ‘one greets Romiossíni’ (Konstantínídu 1973: 44). Konstantínídu does not explain why ‘one greets Romiossíni’ on the Acropolis. Maybe she refers to the site’s association also with more recent events in Greek history, such as the War of Independence. What is interesting, however, is that the monument of classicism par excellence is also considered to be a site where Romiossíni resides.

Thus, evoking the Acropolis does not simply mean evoking the classical past, the one introduced into Greece ‘from outside’, but a familiar and common national past and present, including a reservoir of values, meanings and memories. Drawing from Gourgouris’ comparison of nation-building with dream-work, I described the elision and layering of the cultural meanings of the Acropolis as similar to the dream-work’s mechanisms of condensation and displacement. For Freud, a consequence of the work of condensation in dreams is ‘over-determination’: not only are the elements of a dream determined by the dream-thoughts many times over, but the individual dream-thoughts are represented in the dream by several elements. Similarly the Acropolis’ multiple meanings are re-determined many times in relation to various ‘national dream-thoughts’ on various levels throughout Greek history. As is the case with dreams, associative paths lead from one meaning of the Acropolis to several ‘national
dream-thoughts', and from one 'national dream-thought' to several meanings of the Acropolis.

Through its material form the Acropolis is there, in its wholeness conveying all its attributed meanings simultaneously. In the process of the Acropolis’ evocation, use, and contestation, its materiality is crucial, as is the fact that it condenses the spirit of Hellenism per se. It sums up Hellenism’s multiple meanings and projects them in a tangible way. Elsewhere, General Makriyánis argued fervently that ‘statues and icons and manuscripts and sacred vessels are not objects for display, but the garment of this country (to rúho tu tópu)’ (Andreádis 1989: 270). In this sense, classical antiquities, among other highly valued heritage objects in Greece, play the role of ‘another skin’, the visible form of Greek identity. All specific features of the materiality of antiquities and the Acropolis in particular, such as authenticity, oldness, wear, and whiteness are important insofar as they project the otherwise invisible, intangible spirit of Hellenism. As Gell (1998: 231) has noticed with regard to the ‘kula’ arm-shell or necklace:

It does not ‘stand for’ someone important, in a symbolic way; to all intents and purposes it is an important person in that age, influence, and something like ‘wisdom’ inheres in its physical substance, in its smooth and patinated surfaces, just as they do in the mind and body of the man of renown to whom it was attached, and from whom it has flown away as an idol of distributed personhood.

The materiality of the Acropolis should under no circumstances be a reason to view it as a wealth external to the Greek self, as its plain signifier. On the contrary, it is a defining constituent of it. Thus others cannot appropriate it without provoking a feeling of violation of the Greek self’s integrity.

Ortner (1973), in her article on ‘key-symbols’, puts symbols into two categories, ‘summarising’ and ‘elaborating’. The former sum up what ‘the system’ means to agents, like in the examples of a flag or the cross of Christianity. Such symbols for Ortner ‘synthesise or “collapse” complex experience, and relate the respondent to the grounds of the system as a whole’ (ibid: 1344). ‘Elaborating’ symbols, on the other hand, contribute to the ordering of experience, they are ‘good to think’ with. Apart from ‘conceptual elaborating power’, these symbols may also have ‘action elaborating power’, ‘that is they are valued as implying mechanisms for successful social action’
The example of the Acropolis shows us how arbitrary a distinction between summarising and elaborating symbols can be (cf. Tilley 1999: 32). Symbols may have both summarising and elaborating power and the Acropolis is certainly a case in point. It condenses understandings about Greek identity, while at the same time it is a means through which experiences, feelings, ideas, and actions are ordered.

One of the people I talked to during fieldwork (Greek lecturer of Artificial Intelligence in Britain – see also p. 189) said that even if the Acropolis was bombarded, burnt, totally destroyed, it would still be there, equally powerful and influential even if in the form of a memory or an idea. This statement is indicative of the fact that in the process of objectification materiality is alternated with de-materialisation and that physical things are generated from and generative of mental representations, memories, feelings and values.

This is not a new idea in material culture studies. A case in point are the elaborate Malangan wooden carvings of New Ireland, Papua New Guinea, which are produced and used during death rituals, while they are left out to rot in the forest just after the mortuary ceremonies are over. It has been argued that the Malangan carvings aim at providing the ‘skin’ for the ‘life-force’ (Küchler 1987) or ‘social effectiveness’ (Gell 1998) of the deceased as well as the parchment on which past and future social relationships are inscribed. In other words, the (non-material) ‘life-force’ of the deceased along with the outcome of his participation in political and productive life is objectified in the material form of the wooden carvings. Through these carvings it is internalised by the participants in the ceremony in order to shape and legitimise future social relationships. The rotting wooden carvings are a material manifestation of the death, while their odour serves to transform material imagery into (non-material) memory.

Another example is the ‘spatio-temporal transformation of Gawa Canoes’ as described by Munn (1977) seen as ‘spatio-temporal transformation of social identities’ (Tilley 1999). Munn describes ‘the biography’ of these canoes from the moment of their construction through to their exchange with yams (inside Gawa) and Kula shell valuables (outside Gawa) highlighting the ways in which material goods are converted into non-material fields of influence.
In its dialectic with the Greeks, the Acropolis is internalised by various agents who re-deploy, reproduce or transform it. Through this process of re-production and re-deployment Greeks give shape to their own identities, thus converting materiality to abstract concepts, such as identity and power, and vice-versa.

Simon Harrison (1999) has noted that processes of ethnic opposition and boundary formation may be accompanied by perceptions not only of dissimilarity, but also of resemblance. Drawing on Weiner’s discussion of inalienable wealth he mentions several cases in which the imitation or appropriation of ethnic identity symbols is perceived as piracy of identity. While Weiner discusses objects needing to be kept out of circulation, Harrison focuses on practices which need to be protected from unauthorised copying or reproduction. In fact, in the last decade the idea of expanding the notion of copyright to defend indigenous cultures has been proposed by an increasing number of legal scholars, anthropologists and native activists (Brown 1998). According to Brown advocates of this idea argue that indigenous people should be permitted to copyright not only objects but ideas, and such protections should exist in perpetuity. Native American tribes, as well as peoples from Australia and the Pacific declare in manifestos their claims to control their cultural property, which is defined in broad terms. We live in an ‘era of cultures’, whereby we experience the resurgence of nationalities and multiculturalism, rather than an ‘era of civilisations’, which is mostly seen as a feature of the colonising West. The appeal of ancient Greek heritage and classical studies progressively declines as part of the wider rejection of Western civilisation and its heritage. Within this framework, Greece has found itself in a paradoxical situation, carrying the load of a heritage which is both ‘civilisation’ and ‘culture’. Brown, in the above cited article, illustrates ‘the problem of literalist notions of cultural property’ with an example originally used by Philippe Descola (n.d.): ‘We commonly regard Greek civilisation’ he says ‘as the source of a mode of formal reasoning known as the syllogism. Does that mean that the Greek people therefore “own” syllogistic logic? Should they be compensated by American or British or Israeli software companies for their collective cultural contribution to modern programming?’ Although Brown uses this example as an extreme and unrealistic case to highlight what he considers as the absurdity of institutionalising culture copyright, throughout the thesis we saw that this is a very real situation that Greeks confront – only in a much wider sense: although their problem is not foreign
software companies benefiting from their ancestors’ ‘invention’ of syllogism, they do try to cope with these dual culture/civilisation, local/global features of their heritage which make it both familiar and foreign to them. As Brown himself notes, ‘calls for the return of land and resources have a way of intertwining themselves with demands for religious freedom and other basic rights to such an extent that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish culture from its material expression’. Negotiation of heritage is a way of peoples making political or cultural statements and claiming the right to be recognised as a political and cultural entity. Although the Greeks never raised a question of ‘copyrighting their heritage’ in a literal sense, they have claimed the right for the world to remember that modern Greece is the descendant, and thus the ‘rightful’ heir of that global heritage.

When I began fieldwork the case study on which I was planning to base my own work was the one about Stonehenge by Bender (1993b; cf. Chippindale 1990). In her study Bender investigated the various ways in which the site of Stonehenge has been appropriated physically and aesthetically by those who had, and have, economic and political power, as well as the necessary cultural capital. She also examined the ways in which these appropriations have been contested by those for whom the site has had completely different meanings: the Druids (of the ancient order of Druids founded in 1833), who worship the sun and claim the place for their ceremonies; the New Age travellers and many other groups like hippies, punks, Krishnas, and all sorts of activists who meet near Stonehenge every summer in a festival on the day of the summer solstice. Since 1961, it has been considered proper for the place to be secured and a barbed wire fence was placed around it. Today, the site becomes a battlefield every year at the summer solstice between those to whom the site belongs officially, and those who claim it, physically and symbolically. The archaeological site becomes a field of negotiation of roles as well as of contestations and clashes between different groups with conflicting interests and ideologies.

Rather than wanting to present a homogenous and monolithic image of the meanings and uses of the classical past and of the Acropolis in particular, I tried to investigate the ways in which it is interpreted and (re)produced by various people in Greece in different spatial and temporal contexts. It turned out that while Stonehenge is mainly contested by various interest groups inside the UK, the Acropolis is contested by
international groups and the Greek state, or the Greek archaeological service. I am not aware of any interest groups challenging the authority of the state to run the site, or the main meanings and messages conveyed at/through the site. I did not meet anyone who tried to substantially re-orientate it. So the two sites are actually quite different in this sense. Also, Stonehenge is not a symbol for England today, the way the Acropolis is for Greece. Stonehenge is not linked with any ‘golden era’ of England, and the English do not associate themselves with those who built Stonehenge. The culture which gave rise to Stonehenge did not get passed on to the world as comprehensively as classical Greek culture. It is really pre-English and ‘non-civilisational’, and thus is not a ‘world heritage’ in the same sense as the Acropolis.

Throughout Greece’s existence as a nation-state, values and meanings have been changing in Greek society. All national identities are in the process of change, and the Greek is not an exception. The Acropolis’ meanings also change. Its high importance as a representation of Greek identity, however, seems to persist. Clearly, I do not claim that the views discussed here are uniform or shared by the four million inhabitants of Athens, let alone by the entire Greek population. However, the discourse about classical antiquity praising its high value is so widespread as to acquire a hegemonic dimension in Greece, therefore it merits attention. Although this hegemonic aspect of the classical past might derive from the context of the nation-state, it is not only constructed ‘from above’. Non-élites are also engaged in the formation and reproduction of attitudes and perceptions about the classical past. They give their own interpretations and make their own use of it.

The opening ceremonies for the restoration works on the Acropolis in the early 19th century symbolically celebrated the restitution of the modern Greek state. More than one-and-a-half centuries later, Greece met the year 2000 under the Acropolis. For the international television broadcast of the New Year’s celebrations, its monuments were illuminated in red and orange colours, while the main fireworks display was also centered around the Acropolis. It seems that Greece’s ruins of the past are not only a centrepiece of Greece’s image in the present, but also the focus of the country’s celebrations of its future.
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