

Mnemosyne and Lethe: Upcycling Spolia at the Athenian Acropolis in the 5th Century BCE

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Background: The Athenian Acropolis

Standing in a landscape of memory as it has for six-thousand-years, the “high city” of the Athenian Acropolis began its life as a naturally accessible, easily defensible summit rich in the most essential resource: water. Over time, the Acropolis became inexorably tied to the cultural history of Athens as the revered rock of the goddess Athena and the home of her sacred emblems: the owl, the snake, and the olive tree. In fact, evidence suggests that the goddess herself was named after the physical location during the site’s early occupation rather than the other way around.¹ Atop the Acropolis, there were statues of Athena Polias (“she who dwells on the [acro]polis”), Athena Parthenos (“virgin”), and Athena Nike (“victory”) featured in individual temples for centuries.² Shrines to her alternative epithets and to other deities were also present, defining the area as an established religious sanctuary for generations to come. However, the character of the Acropolis is not simply focused on religious significance. In the Bronze Age (2900 - 1050 BCE), this area developed into a heavily fortified citadel with a massive Cyclopean wall circling the stronghold for defense. Moreover, the centrality of the Acropolis in the Greek City-State of Attica meant that it played a large role in controlling the metropolis during the political wars of the Archaic period (700 - 480 BCE). Seizing it was the equivalent of a tyrannical coup d’état.³ When the Spartans attempted to control Athens following the deposition of the Peisistratid tyrants, the Athenians themselves besieged the Acropolis and established their famous democracy.

With this multifaceted history as both a religious sanctuary and a strategic political outpost, how then can we define the Athenian Acropolis during the transition to the Classical period? At the turn of the 5th century BCE, the Athenian democracy was engaged in a test of wills against the Persian Achaemenid Empire. Reeling from his double defeats at Sardis (498 BCE) and Marathon (490 BCE), Emperor Darius of Persia was fiercely committed to squashing the recalcitrant Athenian city-state at the far reaches of his territory and made preparations to invade Greece once again. However, death thwarted his plans in the interim and left his son Xerxes at the helm in 486 BCE. After subduing a revolting Egypt, Xerxes determined to extend his domination from Asia into Europe and teach the Athenians a lesson they would not soon forget. True to form, his large armies blazed a path through Greece for a period of four months, burning and looting in their wake. This situation became so dire for the Athenians that most people resorted to evacuating the city and joining their naval fleet on the journey to the war council at Salamis. Those who remained on the Acropolis barricaded their defenses and made a last stand against the Persians by rolling huge stones down upon the army. Unfortunately for Athens, Xerxes eventually gained access to the citadel and destroyed much of the Acropolis (480 BCE). As the Persians advanced, the Greeks fought valiantly at Thermopylae and Artemisium without gaining any advantage or momentum. However, the tides soon turned as the Athenian general Themistocles led the Greek navy to victory at Salamis. With Xerxes having retreated back to Persia alongside his ships, the Greeks were left with one final obstacle in the form of general Mardonius. Finally, Greek victory was achieved at the Battle of Platea (479 BCE), and Persian forces were ousted

¹ Jeffrey M. Hurwit, *The Acropolis in the Age of Pericles* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 11.

² Hurwit, *The Acropolis in the Age of Pericles*, 21.

³ Here, the “tyrants” referenced are the Greek tyrants who took power into their own hands through popular support and deposed the aristocratic or democratic group ruling before them. See Jeffrey M. Hurwit, *The Athenian Acropolis: History, Mythology, and Archaeology from the Neolithic Era to the Present* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 101.

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from the region.⁴ This was the beginning of a new era for Athens as the agrarian base of the traditional polis relinquished their commitment to property in favor of radical democracy and a naval empire.⁵

When the Athenians returned to their city in the wake of the Greco-Persian Wars, they had to sort through the rubble before they could restore some semblance of normality. Fortunately, one of the leading scholars in field, Jeffrey Hurwit, has provided a clear timeline of development on the Acropolis. Prior to the wreckage, the Acropolis had originally featured two monumental buildings: The Temple of Athena Polias (also known as Archaïos Neos or the Old Temple of Athena) and the Older Parthenon (also referred to as the Pre-Parthenon).⁶ By 480 BCE, the Temple of Athena Polias was already an established fixture in the sacred space of the Acropolis as it contained a prehistoric olive wood statue of the goddess.⁷ In contrast, the Older Parthenon was still in the process of being constructed. Since it had most likely been commissioned following the Athenians' success at Marathon against the initial Persian invasion in 490 BCE, the building only reached the maximum height of the third column drum by the time that it was destroyed.⁸ In addition to these two buildings, the Acropolis was filled with smaller edifices including a shrine to Nike, an entry gateway (propylaeon), a great altar and small buildings.⁹

Following its demolition by the Persian army, the Acropolis was once again evolving as the Athenians began massive building programs. When the people were clearing the rubble from the site, they were forced to carefully pick and choose which materials to reuse. How did they determine what legacy deserved to be remembered atop the hill? What pieces of the past could be forgotten in the future? What attitudes were preserved in the Athenian's collective memory as a result of these intentional choices? In order to uncover the role that its monumental aesthetic played as a visible site of memory, this article explores ways that Grecian concepts of memory and forgetfulness interacted with specific cases of intentional architectural reuse atop the Athenian Acropolis.

Before exploring the historical case studies I've selected for this study, one must examine the historiography surrounding the classical Greek concept of memory. In order to understand the Athenian's potential motives behind purposeful memorialization, I will consider cultural and social influences on the perceptions of memory and forgetting, such as myth and literature. Following this, I will define the particular category of intentional reuse that I believe the Athenians implement when

⁴ This information is a summary of events throughout Herodotus' *Histories* Books 7, 8, and 9.

⁵ Victor Davis Hanson. *The Other Greeks: The Family Farm and the Agrarian Roots of Western Civilization*. 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 359.

⁶ The identifications of these place names with specific remains are still contested. I have attributed the names as I have generally understood them to be applicable throughout my research. Unfortunately, I cannot dedicate a large explanation of the scope of these issues of topography and periodization on the Acropolis within this paper. However, I will provide more information on these uncertainties concerning the archaic structures specific to these particular cases in later sections.

⁷ Hurwit, *The Acropolis in the Age of Pericles*, 68.

⁸ Hurwit, *The Acropolis in the Age of Pericles*, 69.

⁹ On the altar: A large space cut into the bedrock and structural corner stones remain at this site to prove that this was the location of the altar. See Hurwit, *The Athenian Acropolis: History, Mythology, and Archaeology from the Neolithic Era to the Present*, 192. On the small buildings: As only the pediments and decorations of these buildings remain, their purpose, location, and architecture are debated. Scholars have proposed that they could have been used as treasuries, small shrines, or dining rooms. Furthermore, they could have been free standing structures in the open-air or rooms in another building, perhaps the earlier Hekatompedon. See Hurwit, *The Athenian Acropolis: History, Mythology, and Archaeology from the Neolithic Era to the Present*, 112-116.

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rebuilding the Acropolis: upcycling.¹⁰ Finally, I will reach the case studies in which I explore what was forgotten or reused into the Northern Acropolis Wall and the Parthenon following the destruction of the Temple of Athena Polias and the unfinished Older Parthenon when these buildings' materials. By scrutinizing why they made these decisions surrounding repurposed construction elements, or "spolia," I aim to deduce how the Acropolis functioned in the Athenians' collective memory.

In terms of the developing field of memory studies, analysis of the ancient sanctuaries is largely untouched by scholars.¹¹ Conversely, there is certainly a growing scholarship surrounding the practice of reuse in Greece within the realm of spolia studies. However, very few works have explicitly combined memory studies with archaeological reuse. Thus, my research will not only analyze and interpret the Acropolis monuments as deviations from the traditional ideologically aggressive or pragmatically economic reuse of spolia common in the Mediterranean, but it will also be one of the few studies to directly comment on their effect on the Athenians' collective memory during the period of conflict and reconstruction surrounding the Greco-Persian Wars. By analyzing the effort necessary for, visibility achieved by, and long-lasting effect of the reuse of spolia from the Older Parthenon and Temple of Athena Polias, I will argue that ancient Athenians' building programs in fifth-century purposefully upcycled materials in order to preserve a narrative of victory and piety in their collective memory.

Classical Greek Concept of Memory

In order to understand the motivations behind monuments and memorials in Ancient Greece, one must look at the ways in which memory and forgetting appear in fifth-century (BCE) popular culture. First, the Ancient Greek pantheon of gods includes two deities who fulfill dual roles as both complements and antitheses to each other: Mnemosyne and Lethe. According to mythology, Mnemosyne is the goddess of memory invoked by those in need of recollection, as well as the mother of the nine Muses. By contrast, Lethe's primary domain is forgetting and she often manifests in a passive form as a personified river in the Underworld. These two goddesses become especially prevalent in the fifth century when the Orphic cult gains momentum in Athens and Greece as a whole.¹² In addition to this religious significance, there is also a great emphasis put on memory and forgetting within the Greek narrative tradition of famous orators, poets, dramatists, and historians. Trends of wisdom, identification, and idealism arise in the Greek's treatment of memory and forgetting and reveal their motivations behind the practice of memorializing.

Beginning with the divine archetypes, we find some of the earliest mentions of Mnemosyne and Lethe in Hesiod's *Theogony*. Hesiod explains Mnemosyne's lineage as a deity born from Gaia (Earth)

¹⁰ "Upcycling" is a term that I adopted from Sarah Rous. It will be defined contextually in the later section on spolia.

¹¹ See the following scholarship for some examples of works on ancient memory: H.-J. Gehrke, *Mythos, History, and Collective Identity: Uses of the Past in Ancient Greece and Beyond* in N. Luraghi (ed.), *The Historian's Craft in the Age of Herodotus*. Oxford 2001; A. Wolpert, *Remembering Defeat: Civic War and Civic Memory in Ancient Athens*. Baltimore 2002; Susan E. Alcock, *Archaeologies of the Greek Past: Landscapes, Monuments and Memories*. Cambridge 2002; Bernd Steinbock, *Social Memory in Athenian Public Discourse: Uses and Meanings of the Past*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013

¹² James Adam, *The Religious Teachers of Greece*, ed. Adela Marion Adam (Edinburgh: T& T Clark, 1908), lecture 5. Adam asserts that "In Athens we hear of three representatives of Orphism living at the court of Pisistratus [...] who may possibly, as Gruppe conjectures, have been summoned from his native city in order to transplant the Orphic doctrine to the soil of Attica. It is at all events certain that vast quantities of Orphic literature were in circulation at Athens during the next century; and the impulse to its manufacture may well have been given by Onomacritus and his associates."

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and Ouranos (Sky) and as a sister to Kronos.¹³ Her impressive status as one of the first additions to the universe implies a power inherently greater than that of an Olympian god. In addition, this standing suggests that the power of memory is an access point to knowledge beyond space and time, one which she partially passes through her genealogy to her nine daughters.¹⁴ However, there is an understanding that the Muses' insights gained by memory may not be entirely credible, as the Muses can "speak many false things as though they were true; but [they] know, when [they] will, to utter true things."¹⁵ Moreover, the nine Muses begot by Mnemosyne and Zeus provided another service as well: "a forgetting (λημοσούνην) of ills and a rest from sorrow" for the man who would serve them by singing of "the glorious deeds of men of old and the blessed gods who inhabit Olympus."¹⁶ Taking these two ideas in conjunction, this means that the dramatists, lyricists, poets, historians, and philosophers who call upon the Muses seek a direct line to the powerful, universal memory of Mnemosyne that could enlighten them to their history and help distract them from their own circumstances. For just as Lethe was born from Strife in mythology, so too does hardship encourage selective forgetting and, by extension, selective memorializing in the lives of men.¹⁷

With this central idea of memory as a guide to wisdom and a tool for improving reality, the Ancient Greeks situated the deified rivers of Mnemosyne and Lethe into their concept of the Underworld. Though Lethe seems to have been understood as a physical fixture in the land of the dead since at least the sixth-century BCE, the rivers' involvement in the reincarnation of spirits comes from the popularization of the Orphic religious cult in the 5th century BCE.¹⁸ In fact, the earliest reference to the Waters of Memory was the Orphic gold tablets containing instructions for the dead.¹⁹ Despite their antonymic powers, the rivers of Lethe and Mnemosyne were believed to flow parallel in the Underworld, presenting a clear choice of one or the other to the newly dead. On one hand, they could seek the oblivion of Lethe. However, if they wished to retain experiences of their past life to become wiser in their next one, they must step into the waters of Memory. With the goal of becoming sage enough to escape the cycle of reincarnation by ascending as heroes delegated to paradise or divinities returned to the gods after death, the Orphic cult members would have prepared for this choice by appealing to Mnemosyne in nightly rituals to remember the correct rites after death.²⁰ In this popular conceptualization, full recollection is the more arduous, yet rewarding path because one would be reminded of their past mistakes as they labored to overcome mortality, while forgetting everything offers a perpetuation of peaceful ignorance.

¹³ Hesiod, *Theogony*, trans. Hugh G. Evelyn-White in *Hesiod, the Homeric Hymns, and Homeric* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), 132-136.

¹⁴ Luca Castagnoli, "Ideas: Philosophy, Religion and History," in *Cultural History of Memory in Antiquity*, ed. Beate Dignas (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2020), 117.

¹⁵ Hesiod, ll. 57.

¹⁶ Hesiod, ll. 55, 103-104.

¹⁷ Hesiod, ll. 226-230.

¹⁸ One appearance of Lethe as a body of water can be found in Aesop's (620-560 BCE) Fable 587 (Babrius 75 = Perry 317 = Chambry 133) in Lauren Gibbs, *Aesop's Fables* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 271: "...asked him how all the people in Hades were doing. The patient said, 'They are taking it easy, drinking the waters of Lethe.'" Other evidence is present in the elegiac poems of Theognis (6th century BCE), translated in J.M. Edmonds, *Greek Elegy and Iambus: Volume 1* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931) ll. 703-5: "whose wheedling words persuaded Persephone who giveth men forgetfulness by doing despite to their wits, so that through his wilinesses he returned even from Hades."

¹⁹ Fritz I. Graf and Sarah Iles Johnston in *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife: Orpheus and the Bacchic Gold Tablets, Second Edition* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 117.

²⁰ Graf and Johnston, 118, 155-156.

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Be that as it may, the Greek concept of memory and forgetting must be considered in its literary context as well as its religious one in order to understand how they balanced memorializing and forgetting the past. In the Ancient Greek language, the word *lethe* (λήθη) literally means "oblivion", "forgetfulness", or "concealment". Interestingly, this root also stands at the heart of the Greek word for "truth", *aletheia* (ἀλήθεια). As such, there is an idea of "un-forgetfulness" or memory tied closely to retelling true events. Moreover, the word "history" itself is etymologically related to the transmission of a collective memory, as *historia* (ἱστορία) means "finding out from inquiry." This term was popularized during this period because the early historians gathered much of their knowledge of the past by listening to oral recollections of events, narratives, myths, and legends.

At first, this commitment to memory as a receptacle of historical truth was maintained by the traditional oral transmission of stories like the Homeric epics. There was even diegetic recognition of the authority of memory over the past in the *Iliad*, as the individual heroes like Achilles were motivated to victory by the promise that their actions would be remembered by future generations regardless of whether they lived or died. This cultural tendency eventually led to the development of ancient Greek historians like Herodotus, who completed his work "in the hope of thereby preserving from decay the remembrance of what men have done, and of preventing the great and wonderful actions of the Greeks and the Barbarians from losing their due meed of glory."²¹ Herodotus and his fellow historians used the trends in the collective memory to create some of the earliest historical memories, exactly how Halbwachs explains that one wishing "to restore the remembrance of a certain event in its entirety [would] have to bring together all the partial and distorted reproductions concerning it that are held by all the group members."²² Furthermore, the narrative could only be affixed into the truth of the past if the collective memory could be recalled by future generations. As Aeschylus writes in the *Oresteia*, "Children are memory's voices, and preserve the dead from wholly dying."²³ The cultural conception that Mnemosyne (memory) was an access point to truth encouraged ancient Greek authors to connect their stories with the idea of subsequent, collective remembrance.

With such overarching relationships between memory, forgetting, and historical truth ingrained into their culture, it is no wonder that the Ancient Greek people placed so much emphasis on physical remembrance as well. Sculptures, statues, and reliefs were commissioned to immortalize people's actions in stone and keep them ever present in the communities' collective memory. The Archelaos relief, also known as the Apotheosis of Homer relief, is one such piece of art. This was sculpted in honor of a poet who won a musical contest and it actually labels most of the characters depicted. At the top, Zeus reclines beside Mnemosyne while Apollo and the Muses inhabit much of the remaining space in the next two levels. The figure most likely representing the commissioning poet stands atop a pedestal on the third level, while a ceremony led by Chronos (Time) and Oikumene (The Inhabited World) honors Homer below.²⁴ From this physical memorial to the poet's personal success, one can see how significant the power of Mnemosyne was in reinforcing authority, both her position as consort to the king of the gods and contributing to the cultural inspiration of writers. Though this is just one

²¹ Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. George Rawlinson (Public Domain, 1910). This is a summary of the information in Book 1 Clio.

²² Maurice Halbwachs, "Collective Memory and Historical Memory" in *The Collective Memory*, trans. Francis J. Ditter, Jr. and Vida Yazdi Ditter (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 52.

²³ Aeschylus, *Oresteia*, trans. E. D. A. Morshead (Public Domain, 1881)

<http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks07/0700021h.html>. This quote can be found in the Choephoroi section, but line numbers are not provided.

²⁴ Beate Dignas, "A Cultural History of Memory in Antiquity," in *Cultural History of Memory in Antiquity*, ed. by Beate Dignas (London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2020), 1-2.

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example, it is representative of a larger memorializing trend in the Classical period in which the Greek people inscribed memory onto physical objects.

Besides smaller sculptures, large scale monuments were also a visual representation of the “long-standing Greek desire to link the present to the remote past,” as they could amplify local mythologies, histories, and identities.²⁵ The Grecian tradition of erecting *tropaion*, or victory monuments, particularly demonstrates the city-states’ commitment to constructing sites of memory after war had been waged between them. Following the Greco-Persian Wars, these temporary battlefield statues built out of enemies’ armor saw a decided shift towards permanent monuments bolstered by the communities’ support for memorials at home that could recall their triumph over a foreign enemy without decaying.²⁶ Moreover, the iconography of local myths was embedded onto architectural monuments to commemorate a city’s “remembered” origin and collective identity. For example, the sculptures on the East pediment of the temple at Olympia show the preparations for the famous chariot contest between Oinomaos and Pelops, and thus display the local competitive spirit that led to the tradition of the Olympic games. In both the historic and mythological monuments, the Greeks memorialized certain stories to bring proud moments of the remote past to the forefront of the current collective memory.

By understanding the manner in which Greek people “evoked and maintained impersonal remembrances of interest to their group,” their motivations behind building collective memory become clear.²⁷ From popularizing elaborate narratives to building marvelous monuments, the Greek people were always concerned with utilizing memory as a way to perpetuate their culture’s past triumphs and supplant their reality. Their identity and pride were deep seated in their connection – be it as chosen apprentices to the gods or perceived progeny of heroes – to the mythology of memory. Thus, it is only natural that the Athenians who experienced events during the Greco-Persian Wars committed themselves to inscribing similar memories from their own lifetimes into historical narratives and physical monuments for the future collective to remember. Moreover, the Athenians understood that there was no better way to evoke the past than reusing building materials on the Acropolis that visibly recall the struggle and eventual victory of the Athenians.

“Spoliation” on the Acropolis

The term “spolia” comes from a Latin word meaning “spoils.” The most familiar age-old story of spolia concerns the Romans of late antiquity commandeering building materials from their conquered enemies to construct their own newer structures. However, as modern scholars and artists have expanded spolia studies beyond this original limiting temporal and bellicose context, the term “spolia” has been used simply as a generalized synonym for “reused building materials” which could be independent from any prerequisite. I will also refer to it in this general sense. However, the specific categorization of spolia usage for the cases I shall examine will not conform to modern scholarship so easily. As there has been much debate within this field about a specific designation for this practice, there is no widely accepted blanket term that adequately accounts for all civilizations’ use of spolia. Though many have put forth definitive labels to describe this process, only three major distinctions have been popularized: spoliation, recycling, and reuse.

²⁵ Simon Price, “Memory and Ancient Greece,” in *Historical and Religious Memory in the Ancient World*, ed. Beate Dignas and R. R. R. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 19.

²⁶ Lucia Nováková, and Romana Šályová, “Marking the Victory in Ancient Greece: Some Remarks on Classical Trophy Monuments,” *ILIRIA International Review* 9, no. 1 (2019): 193.

²⁷ Halbwachs, 50.

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“Spoliation” often encompasses the ideological implementation of appropriated spolia into building projects. This practice can manifest aggressively, in the sense that the new builders completely demolish the previous structure in order to repurpose the spoils gained from war. Beyond this, spoliation can also be read as the purposeful revival or renewal of a localized past that is culturally distinct from the current inhabitants. As such, spolia in architecture may encourage the present population to recall, identify with, assimilate, and eventually supersede the earlier culture. For example, the early Christian reuse of temple materials could be interpreted as a result of religious triumphalism or as an attempt to invoke the prestige of Classical architecture while overwriting paganism. Scholars determine that the motivation behind spoliation lies in the meaning it attributes to the new context of a subject population, be it a message of “memory, power, prestige, self-image, civic pride, the pedigree of personal and community aspirations, appreciation of ancient beauty, desire, intention, [or] triumph of [religion]”.²⁸ Unfortunately, despite its focus on the motivations of the practice of using spolia, the term “spoliation” is connected to the negative idea of cultural superimposition and largely restricted in usage due to its traditional anchor in studies of late antiquity and the medieval period.

In addition to this idea, scholars have also categorized the use of spolia as a result of “recycling”. The idea of recycling, at its core, subtracts from the material’s *form* and *function* until it is reduced to the physical foundation and remade into another project.²⁹ As such, the materials’ shape or composition can be altered so as to display a completely new arrangement or serve an entirely different architectural or artistic purpose than before.³⁰ This “recycling” definition lends itself to those analyses that focus on the utility, accessibility, and cost of such projects so as to determine if the use of spolia like lime, marble, glass, or metal was based on economic convenience.³¹ However, “recycling” has often been extended beyond its core meaning to duplicate the term “reuse” when only the *function* of the spolia changes.

“Reuse” has become a general term to encompass examples that do not fall into the two previous categorizations. It is a neutral, basic definition for the employment of old materials in something new, and it could encompass accidental reuse or conscious reuse. While it is convenient to utilize this term when recognizing the widespread occurrence of this practice, the word “reuse” does not sufficiently address the major area of scholarly interest: intentionality.³² There is no singular driving motivation behind “reuse,” so one must create their own contextual categorization under this umbrella term before they are able to conceptualize a particular instance of spolia usage.

²⁸ Michael Greenhalgh, “Spolia: A Definition of Ruins,” in *Reuse Value: Spolia and Appropriation in Art and Architecture from Constantine to Sherrie Levine*, ed. Richard Brilliant and Dale Kinney (New York: Routledge, 2011), 78-79.

²⁹ Dale Kinney, “Introduction,” in *Reuse Value: Spolia and Appropriation in Art and Architecture from Constantine to Sherrie Levine*, ed. Richard Brilliant and Dale Kinney (New York: Routledge, 2011), 18.

³⁰ Beth Munro, “Approaching Architectural Recycling in Roman and Late Roman Villas,” in *Theoretical Roman Archaeology Journal 2010: Proceedings of the Twentieth Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference, Oxford 2010* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2011), 76.

³¹ For examples of these studies, see Beth Munro, “Recycling in Late Roman Villas in Southern Italy: Reappraising Hearths and Kilns in Final Occupation Phase,” *Mouseion: Journal of the Classical Association of Canada* 10, no. 2 (2010): 217-242; Ian C. Freestone, “The Recycling and Reuse of Roman Glass: Analytical Approaches,” *Journal of Glass Studies* 57 (2015): 29-40; Michael Greenhalgh, “Spolia: A Definition of Ruins,” in *Reuse Value: Spolia and Appropriation in Art and Architecture from Constantine to Sherrie Levine*, ed. Richard Brilliant and Dale Kinney (New York: Routledge, 2011), 78-91.

³² Sarah A. Rous, *Reset in Stone Memory and Reuse in Ancient Athens* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2019), 11.

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On that note, the spolia cases I have chosen to consider are a result of a specific type of memorializing spolia reuse recently designated as “upcycling” by Sara Rous. Without the strict periodization of “spoliation,” the reducing effect of “recycling,” and the generality of “reuse,” Sara Rous’s definition of “upcycling” provides an analytical framework to understand the intentionality of repurposing specific building materials in a new context throughout different cultures. It implies that the creator knew the significance behind reusing particular spolia as a tool of recollection and intended for the audience to attribute meaning to the visible reproduction of a site of memory.³³

First Case Study: The Northern Acropolis Wall

The Athenian Acropolis stands as a site of memory which can both illustrate the Greek’s communal understanding of how mythologies, histories, and identities must be remembered and demonstrate the practice of upcycling spolia. By analyzing the building programs within the tumultuous age following of the Greco-Persian Wars, I wish to understand how the Athenians decided the future of certain spolia as reusable building materials for contextual memorials, rather than meaningless detritus. Through the analysis of the multi-faceted fate of Older Parthenon and Temple of Athena Polias spolia, my argument challenges the narrative of solely convenient, economized reuse and determines that the Athenian populace was also committed to shaping this site through memorializing upcycling in order to preserve a moment of victory and a pious identity in their collective memory.

As the Athenians slowly began to rebuild the structures of the Acropolis, they needed to make conscious decisions concerning where to place the desecrated spolia of the Temple of Athena Polias and the Older Parthenon. Just as historians unconcealed the past by taking account of collective memories, so too did the Athenians unbury spolia to affect how events were remembered. Examination of the extra effort necessary to utilize these specific building materials as spolia, the intention behind their positional visibility in their new context, and the reactions invoked by the connection between the spolia’s past purpose and its new function will show that the secondary structures – the Northern Acropolis Wall and the Parthenon – demonstrate the practice of memorializing upcycling in the fifth-century BCE.

The Northern Acropolis Wall is positioned just North of where the Temple of Athena Polias once stood, beyond the current Erechtheron. It was constructed soon after the Greco-Persian Wars concluded, though it was not the first building project to be taken up by the community. When the Athenians returned to the city in 480 BCE, Thucydides reports that Themistocles was concerned with defense and ordered that “all the men in the city, in the meantime, both they and their wives and children, sparing neither private nor public edifice that might advance the work but pulling all down whatsoever, should help to raise [the city wall].”³⁴ While this earlier Themistoclean city wall was constructed using the spolia of grave markers (*stele*), walls, houses, or shrines due to necessity and urgency for defense, the monument of the Northern Acropolis Wall was built to deliberately function as a culturally significant site of memory in addition to its basic purpose of protection. In order to verify that the Athenians did indeed upcycle the 29 column drums from the Older Parthenon and a large section of the entablature of the Temple of Athena Polias, one must distinguish this occasion from matters of convenience.

In the first place, it was not easy to transfer and integrate these pieces of spolia into the Northern Acropolis Wall. For one, the Older Parthenon’s column drums weighed seven tons each and

³³ Rous, 6, 11.

³⁴ Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Richard Crawley (London: J.M. Dent, 1910) 1.90.3

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they were transported from the southern side of the Acropolis to the northern side.³⁵ The difficulty of this feat defies any argument that this architectural choice was entirely pragmatic. Instead, it is more convincing that the architects understood the necessity of preserving these temple fragments and decided to install them into a new context where they could still receive the veneration that they deserve. This idea of upcycling is doubly reinforced by the fact that the entablature and column drums were not the most convenient shape for wall building if they retained their original identifiable form. If the Athenians had acted in haste to build this wall for fortification purposes, it would be inconvenient to make accommodations to fit them into a structurally stable, non-formulaic defensive wall when the square limestone blocks of the temple foundations were still available. Thus, it seems unlikely that they acted purely out of urgency to rebuild a cost-effective curtain wall.

Though Sara Rous's use of the term "upcycling" gives little importance to the quantifiable value accrued by the spolia in its new context in favor of focusing on the visibility of the object's previous function, I believe that analyzing an object's change in value during reuse can be useful as well. For example, the fact that the large marble column drums of the Older Parthenon were utilized in the Northern Acropolis Wall shows a clear disregard for their functional and monetary value. Whereas the stone could have been used for inscriptions like the *lapis primus* or reformed as bases for statuary, these drums were instead valued for their appearance and the invocation of their past function over their economical usage. The same could be said for the silex-up-cycling undertaken at the Temple of Athena Polias in (give date/range). Though some of its ruins were left as a sacred place of worship known as the "Opisthodomos," these particular blocks were repurposed.³⁶ Rather than being economically disposed and pragmatic, ancient architects at this site considered cultural and functional values.

Furthermore, the positioning of the spolia in the Northern Acropolis Wall to make it visible and redundant of its past function is deliberate. Unlike the Themistoclean wall, in which the architects broke down the form of the spolia to fit it into the wall by shaving down reliefs or cutting corners into round shapes, these upcycled blocks remained visually recognizable as sacred temple parts.³⁷ Plus, their positioning even mimicked their earlier function as the column drums were laid in a row like a colonnade, and the column capitals and architrave blocks of the Temple of Athena Polias "were built into a stretch of wall that is roughly as long as the temple from which they came."³⁸ Likewise, the flashy colored paint and stark sculpture of triglyphs and metopes would have been visible from quite a distance. By clearly displaying this spolia facing outwards atop the Acropolis in an imitation of their original function, the architects were deliberately drawing the audience's eye to the irregular forms of the spolia in an otherwise square block wall.

Additionally, considering the monumental lacunae; items not included in this display and deliberately forgotten through concealment reveals that the practice of upcycling has contextual importance. Unlike the spolia, the pediments of the Temple of Athena Polias, korai statues, and equestrian monuments were buried behind the Northern Acropolis Wall as well as the south side of the Acropolis as tools to aid in the terracing efforts.³⁹ Because of their burial, they were forgotten until the nineteenth-century archaeological excavations.⁴⁰ Instead of displaying the visage of burned, mutilated, and broken sculptures savaged by war, which may not be as appealing as a reminder of triumph or divine monumentalism, the Athenians ritually interred them. In this practice, the destruction would

³⁵ Rachel Kousser, "Destruction and Memory on the Athenian Acropolis," *The Art Bulletin* 91, no. 3 (2009): 271.

³⁶ Rous, 88.

³⁷ Kousser, 266.

³⁸ Hurwit, *The Athenian Acropolis: History, Mythology, and Archaeology from the Neolithic Era to the Present*, 142.

³⁹ Kousser, 271.

⁴⁰ Archaeologists at this site included Ludwig Ross (1835), Kyriakos Pittakis (1837-40), Panagiotis Eustratiades, A. Paccard (1845) C. Botticher (1862), E. Ziller (1865), and P. Kavvadias (1885-1890).

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fade from the collective memory of future generations as there was no visible site of memory to encourage recollection. With the Acropolis itself being a centralized, raised platform where people approaching from the city below can look upon it, the spolia were reminders of piety and power fitted into a wall built to prevent destruction. This architectural choice sends a very clear message: those who would attack the sanctuary stronghold of the Acropolis shall be defeated for their sacrilegious act of war. It is a commemoration in the Athenians' collective memory of a period of struggle, wartime damage, and most importantly their guaranteed victory.

On one hand, some could regard this monument as a memorial commemorating the Athenians' initial defeat as the ruins devastated by the Persians loomed over them. On the other hand, these pieces are a physical manifestation of the Athenians' adaptability and ability to overcome obstacles and, thus, a representation of pride and power. Either way, it's plausible to assume the Athenians would have been able to recall the collective memory of the Persian invasion, the desecration of the symbols of Athena, the sack of the city, and their destined victory over the "barbarians" for many years to come because of this monument. The northern Acropolis wall also perpetuated the collective memory which recalled the Persians as outrageously impious for destroying temples, despite the fact that the Athenians themselves had done the same thing in Sardis less than a decade before. This new rallying point--which identified them as valiant and righteous in the face of the Persians committing the crime of sacrilege--allowed historians, such as Herodotus, to overwrite the past through selective memory.⁴¹

Second Case Study: The Parthenon

In addition to the northern Acropolis wall, the spolia of the destroyed temples were reused in the classical Parthenon as well. The Parthenon project was delayed about thirty years following the Greco-Persian Wars until the Periclean building program jump started the renovation of the Athenian Acropolis. Some believe that this delay was a result of the Oath of Plataea sworn amongst the Greek allies before the final battle against the Persians in which they promised to refrain from rebuilding ravaged temples so that they could stand as memorials.⁴² Nevertheless, the more likely reason is that the Athenians had accelerated their imperialism during this interim period, so they had to first refill the city's coffers and refocus domestically before they could begin a communal project to overhaul the aesthetic of the Athenian Acropolis. In any case, the Athenians' intentions to evoke the collective memory of their mythological and historical past through upcycling at the Parthenon are ascertainable when one considers the effort they put into preserving the spolia's past contexts, the visibility of the spolia, and the reactions to this new purpose.

The effort put into reusing the original Older Parthenon materials in the Parthenon, while not overtly labor intensive, was greatly demanding for the architects. First and foremost, the limestone foundations were reused in their entirety, but the new design extended the Parthenon by 16 and a half feet to accommodate for the Pheidias Athena Parthenos statue.⁴³ Due to this adjustment, each reusable marble column drum spolia had to be modified slightly in form. The Athenians had to carefully reduce the pieces' diameters by 8 inches in order to maintain the proportions and upward curvature of the original Older Parthenon design.⁴⁴ They did also contribute some back breaking labor to this venture by transporting large marble blocks from the Temple of Athena Polias' stylobate, the stepped platform underneath colonnades, to the west side of the Parthenon where they would function as great steps

⁴¹ Rous, 44.

⁴² Rous, 99.

⁴³ Kousser, 275.

⁴⁴ Manolis Korres, *From Pentelicon to the Parthenon: The Ancient Quarries and the Story of a Half-Worked Column Capital of the First Marble Parthenon* (Athens: Melissa Publishing House, 1995), 56, 60, n. 37, as cited in Kousser, 275.

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leading up to the temple.⁴⁵ While it would have been more time consuming to restart the building project, the architects evidently put in a lot of effort to bring the past context of these spolia unmistakably into the new Parthenon by visibly mimicking its previous shape.

Furthermore, the choice to visibly reuse the Older Parthenon foundation is a significant symbol of continuity, a promise to the people of Athens that their grand dedication to Athena need not be abandoned.⁴⁶ This seems to be a very different attitude than the community took in the past. For instance, before building the Pre-Parthenon, the Athenians had largely removed or buried the building(s) of the archaic Hekatompedon, “hundred-footer,” predecessor that existed on this site. If one subscribes to the theory that this area was occupied by the Bluebeard Temple as an Ur-Parthenon, all evidence of this edifice, including the foundations, was removed from the area while the “floating” pieces of *oikemata* (small rooms/buildings) were buried.⁴⁷ The choice to forget the earlier structural materials may be based in historical context, for the Bluebeard Temple and *oikemata* were built during the period of tyranny in Athens. When the relatively new democracy won an outstanding victory at Marathon, where they were reported to have lost 192 men compared to the Persians 6400 deaths, they may have wished to create a tribute to their victory and Athena which could exhibit their newfound public prosperity.⁴⁸ In contrast to these earlier actions of forgetting, the outward foundations’ visible reappearance between the Older Parthenon and the Parthenon marks an intentional choice to reassure the Athenians that this period of victory and prosperity would continue.

In addition to the visibility of the foundations, the reused stylobate blocks of the Temple of Athena Polias were featured on the West end of the Parthenon in a manner that plainly invoked the familiar sacred visage while also contributing to the democracy’s public statement of victory. As this northwestern view was the first thing people would see when they entered through the Propylaea gate, this spolia became embedded into the iconic timeless image of the Parthenon’s facade. For instance, consider Petros Moraites’ famous photo of the Parthenon “liberated.”⁴⁹ Looking upon the temple from a distance, Moraites captures the impression of powerful monumentalism as the Parthenon – central in the frame and in stark contrast – dwarfs the two figures in the foreground despite its crumbling state. Moreover, this photo preserves a historical moment when the newly independent Athenians had recently cleared post-antique structures as a purifying effort during nation-building.⁵⁰ The ancient Athenian architects would have known that the western façade of the Parthenon would be in the direct line of sight and, thus, a tool to inspire awe and pride. Using the spolia of the Temple of Athena Polias

⁴⁵ William Bell Dinsmoor, “The Hekatompedon on the Athenian Acropolis,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 51, no. 2 (1947): 135-6, as cited in Jeffrey M. Hurwit, “Space & Theme: The Setting of the Parthenon” in *The Parthenon: From Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Jenifer Neils (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 26.

⁴⁶ For an image of the foundations from the Older Parthenon visible beneath the Classical temple, see Rachel Kousser, “Destruction and Memory on the Athenian Acropolis.” *The Art Bulletin* Vol. 91 No. 3, 2009.

⁴⁷ For more information on the controversy, see Hurwit, *The Athenian Acropolis: History, Mythology, and Archaeology from the Neolithic Era to the Present*, 111-112. In summary, the first theory asserts that the Bluebeard temple shared the same foundations as the later Temple of Athena Polias and the Hekatompedon (alternative name for the Parthenon site) was an open area with small *oikemata* buildings. The second theory uses evidence from the Hekatompedon Decrees and the archaeological discrepancy in the tools used to build the foundations and the Bluebeard temple’s sculpture and architecture in order to demonstrate that the Bluebeard Temple was actually an Ur-Parthenon.

⁴⁸ Hurwit, *The Acropolis in Age of Pericles*, 49.

⁴⁹ For an image of Pedro Moraites’ photo, the Parthenon liberated, see Samantha Martin-Mcauliffe and John Papadopoulos, “Framing Victory: Salamis, the Athenian Acropolis, and the Agora,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 71, no. 3 (2012).

⁵⁰ Samantha Martin-Mcauliffe and John Papadopoulos, “Framing Victory: Salamis, the Athenian Acropolis, and the Agora,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 71, no. 3 (2012): 333.

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in the Parthenon contributed to building a collective memory of sacrosanct patriotism pervasive enough that nineteenth-century Athenians utilized it to reinvent and contextualize their modern identity.

Beyond this, the upcycling of spolia had a profound effect on the collective cosmological memory of the Athenians. While both the Older Parthenon and the Parthenon monuments were clearly invoking and reflecting the victory of the Athenians over the Persians on two separate occasions, they are also quintessentially reinforcing the local mythology and identity of the city. The Parthenon's upcycling, taken in conjunction with the sculptural flourishes of battlefield stories on its friezes, contextualizes this addition to their collective memory as a symbol sustaining the belief that Athena's wisdom and strategy is always protecting them. Athena Parthenos, the "virgin", is honored here with a monument of victory for she is the reason that their stronghold is nigh impregnable. This reference to their roots as the chosen clients to Athena bound to the land is even reflected in the popular visual iconography of autochthony and the continuous inhabitation of an heritage area by a an early Classical-period-era society.⁵¹ Creating the Parthenon in close proximity to its earlier incarnation, made it possible for architects to reuse sacred materials. Thus, Athenians could forget that there ever was such a stressful abandonment of the city during wartime. Instead, they could imagine that they would always rule atop the Acropolis, where they belonged, because they carried favor with the most righteous, wise, and strategic goddess. When Pausanias, a Roman traveler of the 2nd century CE, began describing the statues of Athena atop the Acropolis, he felt it necessary to remark a second time that "the Athenians are far more devoted to religion than other men."⁵² The citizen's monumental worship of Athena and their autochthonous roots in Athens manifested through the magnificence of the Parthenon and its decorations to make their legacy palpable for years to come.

Conclusion: Monumentalizing Athenian Memory

The aesthetic character of the Athenian Acropolis has always been a reconciliation of opposites with the stronghold citadel and the pious sanctuary repeatedly memorialized within the building projects atop its summit. In these cases of spolia within the Northern Acropolis Wall and the Parthenon, this twofold commemoration is resolved within single structures. This practice is especially effective on the Acropolis due to the dual nature of Athena herself, as a virginal, moral figure of virtue and a strategic, militaristic support. At the heart of each manifestation, the motif of wisdom remains.

As the Ancient Greek conception of memory outlines, the narrators of history relied on the power of memory to provide them with an inkling of that same divine wisdom. By perpetuating their cultures' past triumphs and supplanting their uncertain reality with religion, literature, and monuments inscribed with memory, the Ancient Greek's identity and pride was founded on their connection to a glamorous past, frequently imagined through myth. After experiencing the harsh reality of war and loss alongside exuberant victory, the Athenians involved in the Greco-Persian Wars contributed their own selective recollection of events to the collective memory by building a site of memory symbolizing both tragic defeat and inevitable, stubborn victory.

Moreover, the Athenians understood that there was no better way to evoke the past than reusing the spolia of the Older Parthenon and Temple of Athena Polias which visibly recalls the past glory, the experience of their struggle, and the conclusion of the Greco-Persian War. Their deliberate memorializing attitude can be seen in the case studies which I analyzed as the architects took extra effort to utilize these specific building materials without changing the form overmuch, intentionally

⁵¹ Jacquelyn Clements, *Visualizing Autochthony: The Iconography of Athenian Identity in the Late Fifth Century BCE* (PhD dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 2015), 1.

⁵² Pausanias, *Description of Greece, Book 1: Attica*, trans. W. H. S. Jones (Public Domain, 1933), 1.24.3.

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positioned the spolia to be visible symbols of their past function, and tried to invoke reactions in their audience which would commit this new context to the collective memory for generations to come.

In the case of the Northern Acropolis Wall, the Athenian architects upcycled decorative materials from the two temples in order to create an imposing war memorial that affected the way the collective remembered the Persians. We can determine that this was deliberate, intentional spolia upcycling by understanding how difficult the transportation of the heavy column drums and entablature in their entirety would have been. However, they still chose to preserve the original form of the spolia, even when it was not conducive to their basic job of wall building and may not have been the most economical use of these valuable marble pieces. The presentation of the materials was significant as well, as the colonnade of the Parthenon's column drums and the frontal façade of the Temple of Athena Polias's decorative entablature blocks led to a distantly visible site of memory that invoked piety and triumph when looked upon by those below the citadel. This commemoration of the Persian invasion in the context of temple desecration led to a reshaping of the identity of both the Athenians and the Persians that was presupposed back onto the past in the collective memory. As a result, the Athenians imagined themselves as pious defenders and cultural leaders with the gods on their side while the Persians were denigrated to sacrilegious barbarians, even in recollections of incidents before the Greco-Persian Wars.

In the case of the Parthenon, the same qualifications for spolia upcycling are found to have encouraged the longevity of a particular collective memory. In terms of the care taken to maintain the spolia's shape to invoke the past, the Parthenon's architects worked critically to maintain the same image of the earlier temples while adjusting each piece of spolia accordingly to keep it true to its original function. Thus, the Parthenon could resurrect the familiarity of their earlier sites of worship. Furthermore, though previous foundations had been completely buried or removed, this project reused the materials intended for the Older Parthenon so as to enforce continuity with the earlier project and what it represented. As such, the upcycling within this project reinforced the Athenian peoples' long standing, autochthonous connection to the site of the local Athena Parthenos. Furthermore, it relayed how the impregnability of Athena would be assured as they have proven twice over that Greece could not be taken by the Persians when Athens was part of the fight.

The conclusions of my case studies demonstrate the incumbent significance of spolia in the collective memory of the Acropolis in the 5th century BCE and beyond. So, what about today? What can this analysis of the upcycling in these structures offer in our current context? Most importantly, I believe that this realization can shed some light on the current controversy over the rightful ownership of the Parthenon friezes, presently housed at the British Museum after being commandeered by archaeologists in the nineteenth-century. The systematic removal of pieces of this memorialized structure has had an effect on the Athenians' sense of heritage and rallying patriotism. These marbles were not only significant in their basic functions, but also as sources of communal pride and identity within the enduring Parthenon and the greater Acropolis. When the local Athenians cannot look back on their ancestral heritage with their own eyes, as they had done for millennium, the original purpose of the sculpture affixed to the Parthenon is lost. The intrinsic value of upcycling and rebuilding lies in the recollective significance it perpetuates, so the Athenians' memory of the Parthenon – so deeply rooted in their culture that it has been sustained since the fifth century – should be respected.

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