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A Game Changer? The Complexities of Cultural Heritage in the Debate Over the Elgin Marbles



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Introduction

The pyramids of Giza, the Coliseum, the Great Wall of China, the Parthenon—these are all monuments from antiquity which can easily be called forth and visualized in our minds. These monuments are pieces of our collective past, architectural wonders, mathematical feats, works of art, and they serve as reminders of a time long gone. These ancient artifacts inspire artists, writers, children, politicians, as well contemporary and future generations. These monuments draw people to them, capturing their minds, imaginations, and hearts. Most importantly, these artifacts symbolize the glory and achievements of humanity from days gone by. Nations desperately try to connect the present to this past greatness.

This is no more apparent than in the debate over the Elgin Marbles—the marble sculptures and figures taken by Lord Elgin of Britain from the Parthenon in Athens, Greece in the early 19th century. The debate between Great Britain and Greece over the repatriation of the Elgin Marbles to Greece has captured the attention of the global community, extending past the borders of Greece and Great Britain. Greece, Great Britain, and the global community relate to and feel a connection to the Elgin Marbles, leading them all to believe that they have a stake in the issue. The debate over the Elgin Marbles illustrates the importance of these treasures not just as works of art but as part of cultural heritage.

The Elgin Marbles and the Parthenon as a whole infatuate us due to their symbolic importance, making them part of cultural heritage. Cultural heritage objects and monuments are artifacts and sites that have been imbued with cultural significance, representing that cultural heritage and materializing the ephemeral notions of culture and history. In fifth century BC Athens, the Parthenon was a symbol of Athenian national identity, embodying and portraying the characteristics that defined Athens in the Athenian mindset. Over two and a half centuries later,

the Parthenon is still of symbolic importance; not simply because of its past symbolism but also because of how that symbolism has been appropriated and adapted in contemporary times.

By looking at the multifaceted debate over the return of the Elgin Marbles one can see the rise in the prominence of cultural heritage in the fight over these magnificent objects and sites. By examining the debate over who is entitled to possess the Elgin Marbles, we will be able to more fully understand the complexity of the issue. In order to realize the symbolism and significance behind the Elgin Marbles as pieces of cultural heritage, as well as the importance of cultural heritage itself and how it can effect and be manipulated by society, one must start to analyze how this long running dispute has evolve. Only once the issue of cultural heritage has been viewed in its full complexity can we begin to consider whether or not it supports any one side in the Elgin Marbles debate.

A. The Elgin Marbles

The Elgin Marbles are a collection of marble sculptures and statues that were removed from the Acropolis, specifically the Parthenon, in Athens by Lord Thomas Bruce, the Earl of Elgin, between 1801 and 1802. This group of marbles, known as the Elgin Marbles, are now located in the British Museum, so that almost half of all the Parthenon Marbles, the marbles from the Parthenon in general, are housed in the British Museum and the other half in the New Acropolis Museum in Athens.¹ Altogether, the British Museum possesses half of the frieze, fifteen metopes, and seventeen pieces from the pediments.² Though the main focus of this paper is on the Elgin Marbles it is necessary to begin by putting them into context with the Parthenon as a whole.

The importance of the Parthenon in antiquity has been questioned and undermined, as Ian Jenkins claims that the importance of the Parthenon is “nowhere found in antiquity itself. In Greek and Latin literature, for example, there is hardly a mention of the temple and such as there is comes chiefly from the Roman period with the brief notes on the building and its sculptures that Pausanias included in his travel guide to Greece.”³ Though direct mention of the Parthenon is infrequent, the symbolism of the Parthenon Marbles, which parallels the themes of Perikles’ Funeral Oration, held great importance to the ancient Athenians and their sense of national, civic, and personal identity. It is through the symbolism of the marbles that a continuous national narrative and national identity are visible, detailing what it meant to be an Athenian in fifth

¹ Yannis Hamilakis, *The Nation and Its Ruins: antiquity, archaeology, and national imagination in Greece* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 246.

² Christopher Hitchens, “The Elgin Marbles,” in *The Parthenon Marbles: The Case for Reunification*, ed. Christopher Hitchens (London and New York: Verso, 2008), 24.

³ Ian Jenkins, *The Parthenon Sculptures In the British Museum* (London: British Museum Press, 2007), 18.

century BC Athens, creating what Benedict Anderson calls an imagined community,⁴ showing that the Parthenon Marbles played a central role in tangibly representing fifth century BC Athenian nationalism.

B. The Persian Wars and a New Parthenon

The death and destruction of the Persian wars left a lasting impression on ancient Greece. The ancient Greek city states had just suffered invasion by a foreign empire, seeing their lands ravaged and their cities sacked. Athens had faced one of its greatest fears, by the Acropolis not only being burnt and their temples destroyed, but also by the Persians threatening to reinstate the former Athenian tyrant, Hippias and destroy the still recent democracy. This led to a fear of and malice towards the “barbarian” by the Greeks and especially by the Athenians, who vowed not to rebuild any of the sacred structures destroyed in the war until all Persians were gone from Greece. These ruins would serve as a reminder of the barbarism of the Persians.⁵

After the Persian wars, foreigners were viewed as barbarians, embodying all the Greek vices: tyranny, cowardice, luxury, effeminacy, cruelty, stupidity, and emotionality.⁶ The victories of the Greeks at Marathon, Plataea, and Salamis boosted Greek self-confidence, especially for the Athenians, who considered themselves to be the “first among the Greeks.”⁷ Yet the defeat of the Persians was not sufficient for the Athenians, who formed the Delian League, which later turned into the Athenian Empire, to route all Persians from Greek land. The victory of a democratic, “civilized,” state over a barbarous tyranny played a key role in how the Athenians

⁴ Benedict R. O’G Anderson, *Imagined Communities: reflection on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London & New York: Verso, 1991).

⁵ Sarah Pomeroy, *Ancient Greece: A Political, Social, and Cultural History* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 228.

⁶ Edith Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 17.

⁷ Lynette Mitchell, *Panhellenism and the Barbarian in Archaic and Classical Greece* (Oakville, CT: David Brown Book Co., 2007) 83.

viewed themselves after the Persian Wars, as the champions of democracy, freedom, and civilization. It is this motif of the success of democracy and civilization over the barbarian other that was one of the central themes on the new Parthenon sculptures, which were part of Perikles' Acropolis Building Program.

Construction of the new Parthenon began in 447 BC as part of Perikles' Building Program. Perikles, Athens' head statesman at the time, pushed his building program forward, funding it at the Athenian allies' expense, taking the funds from the Delian League treasury. The building of the Parthenon was headed and supervised by the sculpture Pheidias, along with two main architects: Kallikrates and Iktinos.⁸ Instead of keeping the ruins of the ravaged buildings as a reminder of Persian barbarism, Perikles decided it was time to beautify the city and create a building that would not only warn of Persian incivility, but also celebrate the freedom and power of Athens as a lesson to others and as an ideal for future generations to look up to. Finished in 432 BC, the Parthenon was dedicated to Athena at the Panathenaic festival in 438 BC.⁹

The temple of Athena Parthenos (the virgin), otherwise referred to as the Parthenon, is a Doric peripteral amphiprostyle temple made of white Pentelic marble.¹⁰ Knowing that vertical lines would appear to curve from afar to the human eye, the architects used a few mathematical tricks to counter this illusion through the use of entasis, the swelling of the mid-section of the columns; through inclination, the tilting of the columns and walls inward; and through horizontal curvature, the raising of the middle of the floor.¹¹ Not only was the Parthenon a work of mathematical genius, but it was also a work of fine art, covered in sculptures. Highly detailed

⁸ Stephen G. Miller, "The Athenian Century," in *The Destiny of the Parthenon Marbles*, ed. Richard Hubbard Howland (Washington, DC: Society for the Preservation of the Greek Heritage, 2000), 89.

⁹ Nancy Sultans, "Greece: Elgin Marbles: Should the Elgin Marbles be returned to Greece," in *History in Dispute: Classical Antiquity and Classical Studies*, ed. Paul Miller (Detroit and NY: Thomson Gale), 98.

¹⁰ Pomeroy, 303.

¹¹ Miller, 89-90.

sculpture decorated the pediments, frieze, and metopes, as well as the statue of Athena Parthenos housed inside the Parthenon. Though the remnants of these sculptures are viewed as white marble today, originally they were brightly painted with blue, red, and gold.¹²

C. Symbolism of the Parthenon Marbles

Though a work of art, it is what the marbles symbolize that shows their true importance to the ancient Greeks, especially in terms of ancient Athenian nationalism and national identity. Benedict Anderson's well known imagined community includes a continuous national narrative that unites the citizens and gives national identity, even if that narrative is idealized and not one hundred percent factual. Though this is seen as a more common belief dating to the start of the rise of nationalism, it is apparent as far back as fifth century BC Athens. The Parthenon Marbles and the stories they tell represent freedom, democracy, culture, the defeat of the barbarian, unity, imperialism, and empire, providing a continuous national narrative for the ancient Athenians. All of these motifs are at the core of what it means to be an Athenian during the Periklean era, composing fifth century BC Athenian national identity. The Parthenon is the embodiment of Athenian ideals, pride, and power, representing and materializing the "ancient Greek ideas of justice, freedom, and intellectual and artistic excellence that marked the height of the political power of Athens in the fifth century."¹³

These sculptures depict the history, myths, and national identity of Athens. All together the Parthenon Marbles include the pediments (east and west), the metopes, the frieze, and the statue of Athena Parthenos. There are two pediments, triangular gables crowning the entrance and back of the Parthenon. The east pediment depicts the birth of Athena. Unfortunately, a large

¹² Pomeroy, 309.

¹³ Sultans, 98.

portion of the east pediment did not survive due to an explosion in 1687, when the Venetians fired a bomb on the Parthenon, which was housing the Ottoman's gunpowder, destroying the roof and much of the east pediment.¹⁴ The central deities are lost, though Pausanias, somewhat helpfully, does mention that at the entrance to the temple "everything on the pediment refers to the birth of Athena."¹⁵ It has been speculated that Zeus, seated on his throne, is giving birth to Athena from his head, for he had swallowed her pregnant mother, Metis, in fear of being overpowered by his offspring. Hephaestus stands near with his axe, which he used to split open Zeus's head to allow for Athena's caesarian delivery. On either side the gods and goddesses surround the central deities, watching this miraculous birth, though the surviving fragments make it difficult to identify which gods and goddesses are present (Image 1).¹⁶

Like the east pediment, the west pediment was also affected by the 1687 explosion and even less of the west pediment survives today. Once again, Pausanias helps to fill in the gap by recording that "at the rear there is a rivalry for the land between Poseidon and Athena."¹⁷ In addition to Pausanias, the drawings of Jacques Carrey record the original composition of the figures, giving a more precise idea of what the pediment initially looked like.¹⁸ The west pediment depicts the competition of Athena and Poseidon for Athens, which supposedly occurred on the Acropolis. The two contending deities both offered gifts to Athens in hopes of becoming the patron god of the city. Athena presented Athens with the gift of the olive tree, while Poseidon offered a salt water spring. Not surprisingly, the olive tree and Athena won the competition.

¹⁴ Miller, 93.

¹⁵ Pausanias, *Guide To Greece*, 24.5.

¹⁶ Jenkins, 35-36.

¹⁷ Pausanias, 24.5.

¹⁸ Jenkins, 38.

The pediments play a role in enhancing Athenian nationalism and relaying a continuous national narrative. At first glance both pediments merely celebrate Athena, the patron goddess of the city. However, the birth of Athena on the east pediment is a miracle, Zeus giving birth himself from his own head. This is a miracle symbolic to the birth of democracy.¹⁹ Both have never been accomplished before, celebrating Athena and Athens' democracy. Seemingly less symbolic, Athena's victory over Poseidon in the contest for Athens may not be directly related to Athenian identity, however, it does establish that Athena is the leader and protector of Athens. This brings to mind that Athena is not only the patron goddess but had a role in the birth of the first Athenian. Though there are conflicting myths, a prominent myth of the time was that Hephaestus tried to have sexual interactions with Athena, a virgin goddess, who spurned him. Despite this, Hephaestus ejaculated and his sperm touched the earth of Athens. From this came the first Athenian, whom Athena treated as her own child. Even though this myth is not depicted on the Parthenon, it must have sprang to mind in light of the topics portrayed in the pediments. Through this story of origin, the Athenians can claim that they not only have always resided in Athens but that they also come from the land itself. This is used to create a continuous national narrative, uniting the Athenians and creating pride in their history.

In addition to the pediments, a series of triglyphs (two vertical bars separating the metopes) and metopes (decorated squares) ornamented the exterior of the Parthenon. Each metope was carved in high relief, numbering ninety-two metopes in all with thirty-two on each long side and fourteen on each short end. Each metope contains only two figures apiece and each side of the Parthenon contains metopes depicting a different mythological battle.²⁰ The north side metopes show images from the Trojan War, with Greeks fighting Trojans, though only

¹⁹ Miller, 91.

²⁰ Jenkins, 40,69.

thirteen of the original thirty-two survive due to Christian defacement and the Venetian explosion in 1687, and of these thirteen only one has not been defaced.²¹

The mythological event of the Trojan War was specifically depicted to represent the victory of the Greeks over the eastern “other.” The defeat of the Trojans symbolizes the defeat of barbarism and foreignness by the civilized Greeks, warning all outsiders that they are inferior to the Greeks and will be conquered. This symbolism does not only unite the Athenians through pride in their strength and power, but it also hints at Athenian imperialism and shows what it meant to be Athenian in fifth century BC Athens: civilized, powerful, the opposite of the “other.”

More of the south metopes survived than did the northern ones, having escaped religious defacement and sketched by Carrey. The remaining south metopes are spread across the globe, housed in Paris, London, and Copenhagen.²² The south metopes depict the battle between the Centaurs and the Lapiths (Image 2), where Theseus, the mythical Athenian king and hero, aided the Lapiths in defeating the drunk Centaurs, who arrived at a Lapith wedding and began stealing the women once inebriated. Here, a common myth is retold to represent Greek dominance over barbarism. The centaurs are uncivilized foreigners, going against Greek hospitality norms by getting drunk and trying to steal their guests’ women. Thus centaurs are used to parallel the Greek stereotype of barbarians as being lawless and uncouth, the antithesis of how Greeks saw themselves, while the Greeks are represented as just, law-abiding, civilized, and superior. This symbolism of cultural superiority defines Periklean Athenian culture, showing how Athenians viewed themselves and materializing Athenian identity in tangible form.

²¹ Miller, 93. Jenkins, 40.

²² Jenkins, 40. Miller, 94.

Unlike the south metopes, all of the east metopes were ignored and left behind by Lord Elgin, as all fourteen were defaced under Christian rule.²³ Despite destruction, the east metopes are said to have depicted the Gigantomachy, the battle between the gods and the giants, who assaulted Mount Olympus in an attempt to overthrow the Olympian Gods.²⁴ Not only does this celebrate Athena by portraying the first victory of the goddess in battle after her birth, but it also represents Greek superiority over barbarians, for the giants are symbolic of the incivility and vicious nature of the Persians. The giants were attempting to topple the rule of the Olympian Gods, which would have brought destruction, chaos, and sacrilege, just as the Persians did when they sacked Athens. The barbarous other violates all the ideals the ancient Greeks hold dear.

Just as the east metopes were defaced by Christians and left behind by Elgin, the west metopes were as well, which show the Amazonomachy, the battle between the Athenians/Theseus and the Amazons,²⁵ who, in myth, had invaded the Athenian Acropolis only to be fended off by King Theseus.²⁶ The Amazons are depicted in oriental garb, clearly linking the invasion of the Persians in retaliation for the burning of Sardis to the invasion of the Amazons in revenge for the abduction of their queen.²⁷ By using Amazons to represent the Persians, the Marbles portray the Athenian stereotype of Persians as effeminate, uncivilized barbarians who flaunt Greek social norms.

In all, the metopes “represent the triumph of the word of law and order over the forces of chaos and hubris.”²⁸ The metopes were designed to both remind viewers “of Athens’ glorious stand against less mythical forces of darkness during the Persian wars... [and] of what Athena,

²³ Miller, 94.

²⁴ Jenkins, 40.

²⁵ Miller, 94.

²⁶ Jenkins, 40.

²⁷ Jeffrey Hurwit, *The Athenian Acropolis: History, Mythology, and Archaeology from the Neolithic Era to the Present* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 169.

²⁸ Maria Brouskari, *The Monuments of the Acropolis* (Athens: Ministry of Culture, Archaeological Receipts Fund, 2001), 145.

and Athens, stood for in moral terms- civilization, order, self-restraint, and creativity.”²⁹ The metopes warn foreigners of Greek, especially Athenian, superiority. By symbolizing Greek/Athenian victory over barbarism, the marbles highlight an essential aspect of what it meant to be an Athenian in the minds of the Athenians; they were civilized, cultured, lawful, the opposite of the eastern ‘other.’

Thus, it is evident that one symbolic importance of the marbles concerns the defeat of barbarism. The destruction of the Persian Wars left a lasting impression on the Greeks, especially the Athenians, who saw their city sacked and their sacred temples burned. The desecration of a temple was an inconceivable evil for the Greeks, showing the barbarism of the Persians. To the Greeks, the Persians had no sense of the sacred, only of the profane. The Persians were uncivilized, uncultured, sacrilegious barbarians. Through depicting mythological scenes of the “other” being conquered by the civilized Greek, the Parthenon Marbles symbolically show the defeat of the Persians and is a warning to all other foreigners. Looking at the metopes, the myths depicted are the Amazonomachy, Centauromachy, Gigantomachy, and Trojan War. All of these are examples of Greek, especially Athenian, victory over barbarians, “a clear allusion to the still recent victories of the Greeks over the barbarians of the East.”³⁰ Also, by contrasting the barbarous ‘other’ to themselves, the Athenians are portraying what it means to be Athenian: civilized, democratic, skilled, pious, free, cultured.

More controversial as to what is being depicted is the almost continuous frieze running along the exterior wall of the cella and above the porch columns. The frieze ran along the top of the opisthodomos and cella walls, containing 111 blocks carved in low relief, making it 160 meters long. This continuous, innately sculptured frieze is rare among Doric temples, adding to

²⁹ Peter Green, *The Parthenon* (New York: Newsweek Book Division, 1973), 71.

³⁰ Brouskari, 145.

the opulence of the Parthenon³¹. On these 111 blocks, 192 figures were carved, which is the exact number of Athenians who died at the Battle of Marathon.³² Of the 111 blocks, 105 survive with forty-nine being held in London, one in the Louvre, and the rest in Athens.³³

Beginning at the west frieze, the figures are of mounted and preparing-to-mount horsemen, elders, musicians, four youths carrying *hydriai* (water jugs), 3 more youths carrying *skaphai* (basins), and attendants with four sacrificial sheep and four cows. The south frieze, though damaged by the 1687 explosion, is known to show, through the aid of Carrey's sketches, sixty riders (Image 4), ten chariots with a driver and an *apobatai* (armed hoplite soldiers) in each chariot, elders, musicians, basket carriers, and attendants with sacrificial cows. The east frieze has sixteen women on each end approaching each other and carrying incense burners, bowls, and other objects for ritual sacrifice and libations. A maiden leads the east side of the procession, handing an offering basket to four marshals.³⁴

In the center of these two processions of women are two groups of elder male figures, possibly the Eponymous Heroes of Athens who represented the ten tribes or the magistrates. In the very center are two groups of Olympian gods, seated in human form but on a larger scale than the humans. Five smaller figures are in-between the gods, including two women carrying stools (?) on their heads, an older woman, and a bearded man folding cloth with a child (Image 3).³⁵ This grand procession has been thought by many to be the Great Panathenaia, the all Athenian procession and festival held in the summer every four years to celebrate Athena's birth, culminating in the dedication of a new peplos (dress) to Athena.³⁶

³¹ Jenkins, 41.

³² Hitchens, "Elgin," 21.

³³ Miller, 96.

³⁴ Hurwit, 186.

³⁵ Hurwit, 186.

³⁶ Jenkins, 82.

This interpretation, while honoring Athena and linking to the dedication of the Parthenon during the 438 BC Panathenaia,³⁷ does not coincide with the central theme of the other relief sculptures on the Parthenon. Also, if this was the Panathanaia, it is missing the maiden basket bearers, the allied tribute bearers, the resident alien women water carriers, the Athenian hoplites, and the ship which brought the peplos along the Sacred Way to the Acropolis.³⁸ This has led Connelly to argue that it is not actually the Panathenaia that is being depicted but is actually the sacrifice of Erechtheus' daughter to save Athens. In Connelly's reading of the frieze, the east frieze is not the dedication of the peplos but is actually the preparations for sacrifice of King Erechtheus' youngest daughter, which an oracle proclaimed as necessary for victory over Eumolpos, a foreign king. The gods are present to watch over the sacrifice. The rest of the procession is explained by the horsemen and chariots being Erechtheus's triumphant army following the animals being brought for sacrifice, as well as the water and honey that are typical offerings. The procession is led by a female chorus and the five central figures of the east frieze are the three daughters, King Erechtheus, and the priestess or queen.³⁹

Regardless of whichever interpretation is correct, both myths can be analyzed as symbols of Athenian national identity, pride, democracy, civility, and culture. The previous motif of Greek supremacy over the barbarian is also present in the frieze, if interpreted as Connelly would have it, as the sacrifice of Erechtheus' daughter for the good of Athens. If this is the case, then the frieze is glorifying "their (the Athenians') first victory over outside aggressors," Eumolpos and his Thracian army and thus is another parallel to the Greek victory over the Persians, especially

³⁷ Sultans, 98.

³⁸ Joan Connelly, "Parthenon and Parthenoi: A Mythological Interpretation of the Parthenon Frieze," *American Journal of Archaeology* 100 (1996): 54.

³⁹ Connelly, 53.

as the number of figures carved are the number that perished at the Battle of Marathon.⁴⁰ This reading of the frieze, as a “virgin sacrifice that ensured victory for the Athenians,” over outsiders, links in better with the theme of the rest of the Parthenon, as “the metopes in turn serve as paradigms for the triumph of civilized order over barbaric chaos... Thus, the full sculptural program serves as a greater metaphor for the Athenian triumph over the Persians in 480 B.C.”⁴¹

This interpretation is further strengthened by the fact that it is the royal family which is sacrificing its own daughters for the good of the city. In this way, Athens is able to keep its democratic values of doing what is best for the city, even though Athens was ruled by kings and tyrants in both its mythical and recent past. One of the main characteristics that separates the Athenians from all ‘others’ is its democracy. As, according to Browning, “Athens was the first society which sought to solve the great problems of reconciling power with justice, social cohesion with individual freedom, and the pursuit of excellence with equality of opportunity. Politics and democracy are Greek words.”⁴² This contrasts greatly to the Persian Empire, which was ruled by a tyrant who had the right of life or death over ever one of his subjects.⁴³ Also, this interpretation creates a continuous national narrative, by re-portraying the past as more democratic and less tyrannical, uniting Athens, both its past and present, through an idealized continuous national history of democracy. By interpreting the frieze in this manner, the relief sculptures of the Parthenon intertwine to create a message of both Greek and specifically Athenian victory over the unrestrained brutality of the barbarian, generating a continuous national narrative that takes pride in Athenian democracy, freedom, and civility.

⁴⁰ Connelly, 53.

⁴¹ Connelly, 71.

⁴² Robert Browning, “The Parthenon in History,” in *The Parthenon Marbles: The Case for Reunification*, ed. Christopher Hitchens (London and New York: Verso, 2008), 2-3.

⁴³ Connelly, 71.

However, a viewer of the Parthenon frieze can interpret the frieze as the Great Panathenaia and still connect the story to Athenian democracy, culture, patriotism, and unity, all of which the barbarians, portrayed elsewhere on the Parthenon, lacked. The Panathenaia was an all Athenian festival, including voting citizens (who were only males), women, children, metics (foreigners), and slaves. Everyone was included and played a role, honoring Athena and celebrating the greatness of the city. This fostered unity and pride among the residence of Athens. The depiction of the Panathenaia also represents the democratic nature of Athens. Even though women, metics, and slaves were not citizens and were denied many rights, on this day everyone was allowed to participate; all are part of Athens. On this national holiday, all residents are in a sense equal, or at the least important and included, which gave a democratic air to the festival. Thus, in this interpretation of the frieze, the frieze and the Parthenon as a whole “was, and is, THE statement and THE symbol of what the Athenian century was all about”⁴⁴: democracy, unity, pride, and the greatness of Athens.

The Parthenon goes one step further in portraying the message of Athenian dominance over the barbarian by the relief sculptures on the Athena Parthenos statue. Ornamentation of the Parthenon was not reserved for the exterior of the temple alone, but also for the interior as well. The gold and ivory statue of Athena Parthenos (the virgin/maiden) was over forty feet tall and stood in the cella of the Parthenon.⁴⁵ Constructed by Pheidias, the statue was comprised of a wooden armature covered in sheet gold and ivory, which could be removed.⁴⁶ Though the statue has long since disappeared, its fate unknown, Pausanias leaves a record of it behind, saying that:

The statue was made of ivory and gold. An image of a sphinx is placed in the middle of her helmet... on either side of her helmet there are sculpted

⁴⁴ Miller, 98.

⁴⁵ Miller, 90.

⁴⁶ Jenkins, 21.

griffins...The statue of Athena us upright in a tunic reaching to her feet, and the head of Medusa, made of ivory, is on her chest. And in one hand she has Victory, as great as four cubits high, and in the other hand she has a spear, and a shield lies at her feet.⁴⁷

Athena's shield had the Amazonomachy depicted on the outside and the Gigantomachy on the inside. On her sandals was the battle between the Centaurs and the Lapiths.⁴⁸

Thus, much of the relief sculpture of the Parthenon relates to each other, emitting a message of Greek and Athenian success against the Persians. The defeats of the Trojans, Centaurs, Amazons, and Giants in the metopes and on the Athena Parthenos statue parallel the defeat of Eumolpos and his Thracians, which was achieved by the sacrifice of Erechtheus' daughters, shown in the frieze, showing the glory of civility, order, and democracy over primitiveness, tyranny, and barbarism. This emphasis that the marbles contain on Greek culture trumping barbarian incivility represents an important topos in Athenian thought and identity; Athenians viewed themselves as the ideal culture: democratic, skilled, pious, civil, law-abiding, and they believed that they embodied these characteristic since their own ancient times, composing a continuous national narrative, linking the recent Persian Wars to their mythical past, to support their idealized view of themselves.

In addition to symbolizing what it means to be Athenian, the Parthenon represents the imperialism of fifth century BC Athens. Not only does the Parthenon Marbles show the defeat of the uncouth barbarian by the civilized Greek, but they are also a clear warning to other states and nations to not interfere in Greece and to be on guard against a now aggressive state.⁴⁹ The Delian League, led by Athens, was formed to route all Persians from Greece. However, this coalition was quickly transformed from a league of independent allies into subjugated tributaries of the

⁴⁷ Pausanias, 24.5 and 24.7.

⁴⁸ Green, 71.

⁴⁹ Morag Kersel, "The Politics of Playing Fair, or, Who's Losing Their Marbles?" in *Marketing Heritage: Archaeology and the Consumption of the Past*, ed. Yorke Rowman and Uzi Baram (New York and Oxford: Altamira Press, 2004), 43.

Athenian Empire. As “allies” the Greek states that were party to the Delian League had to pay tribute in terms of money or ships to the Athenians; this is what financed the Periklean Building Project.⁵⁰ It would not have been possible to finance such an elaborate project without the allies’ tribute, thus the mere existence of the Parthenon represents the Athenian Empire and its imperialistic goals.

The Persians, however, were no longer the enemy, or at least not the only enemy. In addition to being more civilized than the eastern barbarians, Athens saw itself as supreme to other Greek states. The Parthenon does not just celebrate the victory of the Greeks over the barbarian, but the glory of Athens above everyone else. Under Perikles, whose “policies relied, at least in part, on the expansionary economics of aggressive imperialism,”⁵¹ Athenian policies expanded the empire, the fleet, and Athenian power. Yet Perikles’ imperialistic policies did not only include foreign affairs, but domestic as well, seen by his building project, which was both financed by and symbolized the power of the Athenian Empire.

The building project’s importance extends past this symbolism, as it also fostered support for the empire. It was through this project that Athenians were guaranteed jobs and their city glorified; without the empire and the tribute that came with it, there would not be sufficient financial support to finish the project.⁵² Thus the mere existence of the Parthenon, let alone what the sculptures represent, symbolizes imperialism, another identifying characteristic of what it meant to be an Athenian in fifth century BC Greece.

In addition to representing what it meant to be an Athenian in the fifth century BC, the building of the Parthenon itself was of great significance to the fifth century BC Athenians, for

⁵⁰ Pomeroy, 231 and 309.

⁵¹ Miller, 86.

⁵² Pomeroy, 309.

the building project, like the symbolism, united them as citizens. This extraordinary level of detail and ornamentation was a task that involved almost every kind of person in Athens, fostering unity through community effort and involvement in a project which increased the beauty and pride of the city. This immense task required the labor of both skilled and unskilled workmen, providing a source of continuous employment for the city's middle and lower classes.

Plutarch records how Perikles' Building Project incorporated every kind of labor and worker:

So that those who stayed at home might have just as much of a reason to be paid out of public funds and to share in the general prosperity as those who were out at sea or on garrison duty or serving in the army. For since the materials involved were stone, bronze, ivory, gold, ebony, and cypress, and since the skilled workers needed to work with these materials and turn them into finished products were joiners, modellers, metal-workers, masons, gilders, ivory-softeners, painters, embroiderers, and embossers, and since there were also needed people to transport and deliver these materials—that is, merchants, sailors, and helmsmen for the sea, and for the land wagon-makers, keepers of pairs of oxen, muleteers, rope-makers, linen-weavers, leather-workers, road-makers, and quarrymen—and since each line of business deployed, as a commander does his army, a mass of unskilled and unspecialized hired labourers to act as the instrument and physical means of the service to be provided, then the requirements of these projects divided and distributed the surplus money to pretty well every age-group and type of person.⁵³

This not only created a steady flow of income for the average Athenian, enhancing prosperity, but it also united the Athenians together as one state working together for a common goal: the beautification of their city in a desire for eternal glory and pride in Athens. As Pomeroy et al. point out, “such work would provide steady employment to the restless urban poor, but also that a beautiful city would create still more jobs, foster patriotism among all citizens, and attract wealthy, talented metics.”⁵⁴ The building project fostered nationalism and national identity through the unity the work inspired; all jobs, both skilled and unskilled, were necessary and had to come together to complete the Parthenon. In addition to this unity, the beautification of the

⁵³ Plutarch, “Pericles,” in *Greek Lives*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 12.155-56.

⁵⁴ Pomeroy, 302.

city heightened Athenian pride in their state, for “when [it is] completed [it] will bring eternal glory.”⁵⁵

Thus, though the Parthenon is not prominent in the literary sources that survive to this day, its symbolism and its mere existence held great symbolic importance for what it meant to be an Athenian. The Parthenon was used to unite Athens, give the citizens a sense of pride in their state, create a continuous national narrative of democracy and civility, and define what it meant to be Athenian in context to the barbarian. Through this, the Parthenon creates a national identity based on freedom and culture, while glorifying the state. The physical remains of the Parthenon symbolize the cultural heritage and national identity of the fifth century BC Athenians. Material culture plays a large role in shaping a culture, giving those connected to that culture a sense of self and glory. It is through buildings like the Parthenon that the power and prestige of a civilization is materialized and their cultural heritage and national narrative made tangible, as Thucydides states, “Whereas, if Athens were to suffer the same misfortune [destruction], I suppose that any inference from the appearance presented to the eye would make her power to have been twice as great as it is.”⁵⁶ Even if exaggerated, the Parthenon represents the power, prestige, and identity of fifth century Athens, so that even if not written about, what the Parthenon represents shows the importance it held for ancient Athenians.

D. The Parthenon in Perikles’ Funeral Oration

Even though literary sources on the Parthenon are scarce, the symbolism of the Parthenon is present in literature, especially in Perikles’ Funeral oration in Thucydides’ *Peloponnesian War*. The Funeral Oration was given by Perikles in 430 BC at the end of the first year of the

⁵⁵ Plutarch, 12, 155.

⁵⁶ Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, 1.10.2.

Peloponnesian War, which was between Sparta and Athens and their allies in response to Athens' rise in power. The central purpose of the Funeral Oration is to glorify Athens, praising the greatness of the city by focusing on "the city's political and social structures, its moral fabric, its religious institutions and above all its system of education of both the body and the soul."⁵⁷ Perikles presents an idealized view of Athens, both justifying the war and their empire by showing how their society is the best, for they are "the school of Hellas."⁵⁸ Through this idealized conception of Athens, what defines Athenian national identity is found, with the same characteristics, which identified and connected the Athenians in the symbolism of the Parthenon Marbles, being emphasized.

Perikles says early on in his speech that their ancestors gave them a "free" country,⁵⁹ purposely forgetting to mention that the democracy is only about seventy years old, created in 508 BCE.⁶⁰ Though a glorified and nonfactual view of the Athenian democracy, this both shows the importance of the democracy to the Athenians and creates a continuous imagined narrative based on longstanding freedom, just as the Parthenon frieze does if interpreted as the sacrifice of Erectheus's daughter. Athenians identify themselves and their state on the notion of freedom and democracy; it is part of who they are, their personal and national identities.

The Athenian democracy is praised to a great extent in the Funeral Oration. Perikles attributes Athens' "greatness" to it, for it is the "form of government under which our greatness grew,"⁶¹ and is unique compared to all other states' laws.⁶² According to Perikles, there is "equal justice to all," public office is fully based on merit not class or wealth, and there is a lack of

⁵⁷ Jonathon Price, *Thucydides and Internal War* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 179.

⁵⁸ Thucydides, 2.41.1.

⁵⁹ Thucydides, 2.36.1.

⁶⁰ Pomeroy, 199.

⁶¹ Thucydides, 2.36.4.

⁶² Thucydides, 2.37.

violence in the city, for the citizens obey “those in authority and the laws.”⁶³ The Athenians are so invested in liberty that “it is only us who help fearlessly someone not with calculation of what is advantageous rather than with trusting in freedom.”⁶⁴ Perikles has conveniently left out that no women, slave, or metic could vote, that their allies were forced into their empire, and that the recent Citizenship Law of 451 BCE, which required both parents to be Athenian for their child to be a citizen, made it harder for men to become citizens.⁶⁵

Once again, the importance of this passage is not that it is not completely true, but that the Athenians take pride in their democracy and freedom. Democracy is an essential component to Athenian national and individual identity, even if it is idealized, uniting the Athenians through a common ideal of freedom, especially freedom from tyranny and the oppression of the barbarian, which was a prominent fear both after the Persian Wars and during the Peloponnesian War. Thus the symbolism of democracy and freedom from the tyranny and the barbarian, which is so prevalent on the Parthenon, also plays a substantial role in Perikles’ Funeral Oration, showing the importance this symbolism holds in defining fifth century BC Athenian national identity.

In addition to praising the democracy, Perikles champions the victory of Athenian civility over the barbarous ‘other,’ which now includes all non-Athenians, not just easterners, in response to the war with Sparta. The Athenians are not uncouth, luxury obsessed barbarians, for they are refined and intelligent without “extravagance,” or “effeminacy,” and they use their wealth “sensibly.”⁶⁶ Athens is civilized and cultured through their respect of the law, showing

⁶³ Thucydides, 2.37.

⁶⁴ Thucydides, 2.40.5.

⁶⁵ Pomeroy, 239.

⁶⁶ Thucydides, 2.40.

“obedience to those in authority and the laws.”⁶⁷ Perikles is using the same rhetoric that is present in the Parthenon Marbles for defining Athenians in context to the barbarians. Though Perikles is ignoring the recent Periklean building program on the Acropolis, which ironically is a lavish expenditure which could be labeled as “extravagant,” this distance from reality serves to emphasize the Athenian belief in the triumph of civility over barbarousness, with they themselves embodying all that is civilized and refine, the antithesis of the ‘other.’ Perikles praises the civilized, law-abiding, sensible Athenians, identifying key characteristics of what it meant to be an Athenian in the same context as the Parthenon Marbles.

Not only does the Funeral Oration celebrate the supremacy of Athenian culture over the barbarian, but it, as the Parthenon does, connects this to the Athenian Empire, for “not without trouble they [the dead/ancestors] left behind the great empire we possess as a legacy to us who live now.”⁶⁸ What Athens is defending, what it is dying for, is their empire. Though Perikles speaks of freedom and democracy, what is at stake in the war is the empire. This empire is Athens’ “legacy,” to the past, present and future. Even if the empire is only a recent acquisition, being created after the Persians Wars from the Delian League, it is a source of pride and greatness for the Athenians. It is their empire which pays for the building projects, giving jobs and embellishing the city. It is their empire which provides them with imports and trireme (ships); it is their financial support and glory.

Perikles is both celebrating their empire, as well as justifying their imperialism, for Athens is “the school of Hellas.”⁶⁹ Athens is superior to all, with its culture, skill, laws, sensibility, civility, and, especially, its democracy. Besides, without this empire and imperialism,

⁶⁷ Thucydides, 2.37.3.

⁶⁸ Thucydides, 2.36.2.

⁶⁹ Thucydides, 2.41.1.

they would not have all that they have now. Thus, the empire is a crucial aspect to fifth century Athenians' national identity: they would not be who they are, with all their pride and glory, without their empire, so imperialism is an essential characteristic of what it meant to be Athenian, as represented in the Parthenon Marbles.

Just as the Parthenon glorifies Athens and unites the citizens through pride in their city, Perikles' Funeral Oration serves to bolster national pride and patriotism. Perikles continuously speaks of the greatness of the city, taking pride in Athens, its power, and its acquisitions, stating that those "viewing the power of the city every day in deed and becoming lovers of the city, and when she should seem to be great to you, reflecting that men, enduring and knowing their obligations and maintaining a sense of honor in their deeds, acquired these things."⁷⁰ It is through pride and love for Athens that Athenians go off to war, taking pride in their state. It is this pride that fosters patriotism, which is necessary to fight the current war. It is pride and love of Athens that unites the citizens, through their national identity of a shared greatness. This greatness is represented in the magnitude of the Parthenon, which further unites and symbolizes Athens.

With this greatness established, Perikles, like the Parthenon, creates a continuous, idealized national narrative, creating pride not only in the present but also in the past. Perikles says that "they, the same ones always dwelling in the country in succession of descendants, handed it [Athens] down free as far as this time on account of valor."⁷¹ According to Perikles, the Athenians have always been in Athens, linking back to the myth of Hephaestus and Athena, and throughout all that time Athens has been free, i.e. democratic. Perikles creates unity and a continuous national narrative, as the Parthenon does, through his idealized view of Athenian

⁷⁰ Thucydides, 2.43.1.

⁷¹ Thucydides, 2.36.1.

democracy and history. By stating that the democracy and the empire have both been handed down to the current generation by their ancestors as legacies for Athenian power and prestige, Perikles shapes a national narrative, creating a national identity based on the continuous characteristics of freedom, democracy, imperialism, unity, culture, and civility, all of which are also represented on the Parthenon, emphasizing the qualities that are essential to being an Athenian.

Yet Perikles is not solely looking to the past to create a continuous national narrative, but he is also looking to the future, to how he can preserve the prestige of Athens for the future as a source of pride for their descendants as well as a model of freedom for those to come, for “We will be admired by present and future generations... having forced the entire sea and land to be accessible by our courage, having established everlasting monuments of beautiful and good things everywhere.”⁷² Athenian national identity is based in part on their greatness, not only in the past and present, but in their future as well. As Perikles himself says, this greatness is embodied in their monuments, like the Parthenon, so that even if the Parthenon is not mentioned directly here, its importance in materializing the nation narrative, given what it symbolizes, is referred to. Just as fifth century Athens as a whole should be a lesson and model to all in the future, according to Perikles, so should the Parthenon be a model of freedom and art.

Thus, Perikles’ Funeral Oration is not a speech to honor the dead but to glorify Athens, showing what is important to Athens and what it means to be an Athenian. An idealized vision is presented to the audience, for Perikles omits many important details that show that his description of Athens is a fairy-tale version and not reality. Yet it is the imagined community and imagined narrative based on an idealized continuous history of culture, civility, democracy,

⁷² Thucydides, 2.41.4.

freedom, and empire which the Funeral Oration creates that defines fifth century BC Athenian national identity and what it meant to be an Athenian. The purpose of Perikles' rhetoric in the Funeral Oration was to bolster the Athenians, to raise their hopes and to allay their fears by uniting them through the reminder of Athens' greatness.

The building project was another form of his rhetoric to unite and encourage the Athenians, while also warning the world of their power and supremacy, evident by their victories over the barbarians. Though idealized, the rhetoric of the Parthenon, "Like the Funeral Speech of Perikles... captures the spirit of ancient Athens at its best."⁷³ Both served to represent, support, and heighten Athenian national identity and patriotism, uniting the citizens through their pride in their city and through a continuous national narrative. The link between Perikles' rhetoric and the symbolism of the Parthenon Marbles shows that even though the Parthenon was not directly referenced, the Parthenon held great importance in ancient times, for what it represents was prevalent to fifth century Athenians' lives and embodies the essential characteristics of Athenian national identity.

E. Conquered Symbolism

Yet the symbolism of the Parthenon changed with time. In times after, the sculptures' meaning changed as the Acropolis was conquered and reconquered by other nations, so that "the cultural, mnemonic capital of classical antiquity was thus deployed for the legitimization of authority and the negotiation of political and social roles."⁷⁴ After the Peloponnesian War, which the Athenians lost, Athens was on the decline, though the greatness of the Acropolis and the Parthenon were legacies to their past glory, just as Perikles foretold in his Funeral Oration. The

⁷³ Jenkins, 45.

⁷⁴ Hamilakis, *Nations*, 249.

importance of the Parthenon was evident in ancient times, post-fifth century BC, by other powers using the Parthenon as a theater to display their personal glory, as Alexander the Great hung battle shields like trophies on the exterior of the Parthenon in the late fourth century BC.

Alexander's successors acted similarly, with the Attalids of Pergamon, a kingdom in Alexander's empire, erecting victory monuments on the Acropolis in the early second century BC to celebrate the defeat of the Gauls. Octavian also erected victory monuments on the Acropolis of Athens, "Thus the Parthenon, itself a commemoration of Athenian valour, acted as a platform for trumpeting the triumphs of Athens' admirers."⁷⁵

As time moved forward, the Parthenon's importance became less and less about Athens' greatness and more about the foreigners in power. In the fifth century CE the Parthenon and Athens as a whole were under the rule of Constantinople and the Parthenon was turned into a church.⁷⁶ During the Fourth Crusade (1201-4 CE), the Venetians threatened to destroy the city, forcing the Athenians to surrender in order to preserve their city in 1204. The Parthenon was now under Latin rule with a Catholic French bishop, having been turned into a cathedral.⁷⁷ Then, the Ottoman Turks invaded Athens in 1456 CE, but it took two additional years before the Acropolis fell under their control in 1458. The Parthenon was turned into a mosque and the Acropolis a fortress. In 1687 CE the Venetians set siege to the Acropolis and shot a cannon ball at the Parthenon, which was holding the Turks' gunpowder supply, destroying the roof and much of the sculptures.⁷⁸ Preceding all this destruction, the Turks built a mosque inside the Parthenon,

⁷⁵ Jenkins, 21-22.

⁷⁶ Browning, 7.

⁷⁷ Jenkins, 24.

⁷⁸ Jenkins, 26.

which remained until the Greeks won their independence. Thus, “the Temple withstood its conversion into a church, a mosque, and, finally, an arsenal.”⁷⁹

The fact that the Parthenon underwent these transformations is not as important here as what these changes meant for the Parthenon, the Athenians, and the invaders in terms of symbolism. St Clair explains the symbolic importance of these conversions best:

The Parthenon, a building originally erected to celebrate the religious and civic identity of the free citizens of Athens, was successively assigned new meanings; for example, as an affirmation of pan-Hellenic cultural supremacy, of the benevolence of the Roman Empire, of the triumph of Christianity... The long history illustrates vividly the assertion of fictional pedigrees of legitimation, the construction of group identities, the differences between heritage and history, centre and periphery, changing notions of the purpose of art, and the changing perceptions of the sacred and of the authentic.⁸⁰

The Parthenon was a symbol of what it meant to be Athenian in fifth century BC Athens. However, as time passed and the Acropolis became under the sway of foreign powers, the meaning adapted to fit the story that those in power desired. The symbolism of the Parthenon Marbles is shaped by the hand that possesses them, just as history is written by the victors.

F. And Then Came Lord Elgin

Yet not all of the Parthenon Marbles remained on the Acropolis. In 1799 Lord Thomas Bruce, the Earl of Elgin, known as Lord Elgin, was appointed the British Ambassador to Constantinople, the capital of the Ottoman Empire.⁸¹ Elgin, through overextending his power and bribery, removed much of the remaining figures from the Parthenon and shipped them to England. Later, to help settle his debts, Lord Elgin convinced the Select Committee of the British

⁷⁹ Kersel, 43.

⁸⁰ William St. Clair, “The Parthenon Marbles: *Questions of Authenticity*,” in *The Destiny of the Parthenon Marbles*, ed. Richard Hubbard Howland (Washington, DC: Society for the Preservation of the Greek Heritage, 2000), 36-37.

⁸¹ David A. Walden, “UNESCO and the Parthenon Marbles,” in *The Destiny of the Parthenon Marbles*, ed. Richard Hubbard Howland (Washington, DC: Society for the Preservation of the Greek Heritage, 2000), 49.

Parliament to buy the marble in 1816 for £35,000.⁸² The Elgin Marbles are now housed in the British Museum.

Since the Elgin Marbles left Greece, the Greeks have been seeking the return of them. Though their importance and symbolism has changed over time, and the symbolism that they hold today for the modern Greeks and British is not the same as it was in fifth century BC Athens, which will be discussed in a later chapter, the importance that the Parthenon and its sculptures held for the ancient Athenians was of great significance, even if not easily noticeable in their literature. The symbolism of the Parthenon tells a story of what it meant to be Athenian in fifth century BC Athens, helping to create and materialize a continuous national narrative and national identity, uniting the citizens through pride in their state, just as Perikles did in his Funeral Oration. It is this symbolism, this Periklean rhetoric, that the modern Greeks reused for their current national narrative, for a continuous national history, for their fight against dictatorship, for unity, as an ideal to look up, as a sense of pride. It is also this symbolism that the British incorporated as part of their national heritage by supposedly being the ancestors of Greek ideals, as part of world heritage for western democracy, as an ideal of art and culture. Yet, before the debate began over what the marbles currently symbolize and whose cultural heritage they belong to, the argument over the Elgin Marbles was looked at from a legal standpoint.

⁸² William St. Clair, *Lord Elgin and the Marbles* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 261.

Chapter 2: From Legality to Cultural Heritage

A. The Legality Argument

Those arguing over the Elgin Marbles have changed their tactics as the decades have progressed. Originally, the debate was centered on the legality of Lord Elgin's removal of the marbles in question. When Lord Elgin was appointed the British Ambassador to Constantinople in 1799, the Ottoman Empire was eager to get into England's good graces, for the British had recently forced the French out of Egypt and were a much needed ally. Thus the British were awarded many favors by the Ottoman Empire, including a firman, a letter from the Ottoman government, granting permission for Elgin to draw casts and to "take away any pieces of stone with inscriptions or figures," found on the ground.⁸³ Elgin, however, overextended this permission to include the removal of figures from the Parthenon itself through the means of bribery.⁸⁴ To rectify this stretch of power, Elgin obtained further firmans, which granted him amnesty for the removals and permitted the export of the figures.⁸⁵ Altogether Elgin acquired 247 feet of the frieze, fifteen metopes, seventeen pediment figures, and other assorted fragments from the Parthenon.⁸⁶

Lord Elgin's motives for the removal of the Elgin Marbles have been questioned and appear multifaceted, ranging from preserving the marbles, to bring great art to Great Britain to serve as a model of excellence, to hopes of monetary reward, to personal pleasure. Elgin justified his actions by claiming that the French would have taken them if he did not, as they were in competition for antiquities as proof of power and prestige.⁸⁷ He also claimed that it was in the

⁸³ St Clair, "Parthenon," 7.

⁸⁴ St Clair, "Parthenon," 8.

⁸⁵ St Clair, "Parthenon," 7.

⁸⁶ John Henry Merryman, *Thinking About the Elgin Marbles: critical essays on cultural property, art, and law* (London and Boston: Kluwer Law International, 2000), 26.

⁸⁷ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 250-251.

best interests of the marbles, removing them for their own safety unless they be lost or destroyed altogether under Turkish rule. These altruistic motives are countered by his own personal agenda, which he relates in letters to friends, stating that he was intending to “‘collect as much marble as possible’ to decorate his own home, Broomhall, in Scotland.”⁸⁸

Regardless of his motives, the expense of removing and transporting the marbles proved too great for Elgin and he went bankrupt. To help settle his debts, Lord Elgin petitioned the British Parliament to buy the marbles from him, but numerous lords were suspicious of the legality of the situation.⁸⁹ Elgin managed to convince the Select Committee of the British Parliament to buy the marble based on the argument that he was justified in his actions by bringing the finest example of art to Great Britain, thus improving the arts for Great Britain.⁹⁰ In 1816, with taxpayer money, the Select Committee bought the Elgin Marbles for £35,000.⁹¹ This money, however, was not sufficient to alleviate Elgin’s debt and he died in poverty in 1841.⁹²

Greece won independence in 1828 and soon after the Greeks began seeking restitution of the Elgin Marbles, though an official request was not made until 1982. The first known request was made in 1898 by the Greek Minister in London, Ioannes Gennadios. He asked for the Elgin Marbles to be returned but was denied.⁹³ The Greeks were not the only ones uneasy about British possession of the Elgin Marbles. On June 7th, 1916, the first proposal for the return of the marbles in the House of Commons occurred during the Commons debate on the marbles. The proposal was made by Mr Hugh Hammersley, stating that the British Museum should only serve

⁸⁸ Sultans, 100.

⁸⁹ “Appendix 2: The Commons Debate 1816,” in *The Parthenon Marbles: The Case for Reunification*, ed. Christopher Hitchens (London and New York: Verso, 2008), 132.

⁹⁰ St Clair, *Lord*, 261.

⁹¹ St Clair, *Lord*, 261. Hamilakis, *Nation*, 251.

⁹² Sultans, 102.

⁹³ Merryman, *Thinking*, 25.

as a trustee of the marbles in order to preserve them until Athens requests them back. This proposal, not surprisingly, did not pass.⁹⁴

The British contemplated returning the marbles in 1941 during World War II. The British Foreign Office proposed returning the marbles as a bribe to flatter the Greeks into resisting fascist and Nazi armies and influences, though the proposal was never followed through.⁹⁵ The British used the marbles as a bribe again in the 1950s during the anti-colonial struggle in Cyprus, which was protesting British colonial rule. If the Greek government withdrew their support from the resistance, then just maybe the Elgin Marbles would be returned. They were not.⁹⁶ Each time the British government contemplated restitution, especially as a bribe for good behavior, the wording and proposals were kept vague, keeping the British from being bound by law or agreement, just hinting at return.⁹⁷

The Greek restitution movement picked up speed in the 1980s, when it became the most important archaeological issue for the Greek government.⁹⁸ The first official request for the return of the Elgin Marbles was submitted in 1982 by the Greek Ministerial Council to the British government. Then, in 1983, a specific request was submitted before UNESCO by Minister Mercuri, who flew to Mexico City to make her plea before a meeting of the Ministers of Culture sponsored by UNESCO.⁹⁹ Soon after this plea, Great Britain withdrew from UNESCO, leading some to suspect that Mrs Thatcher's hasty break with UNESCO was prompted by the debate over the marbles, as well as by American influences.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ Hitchens, "Elgin," 54-55.

⁹⁵ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 256.

⁹⁶ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 256.

⁹⁷ St Clair, "Parthenon," 31-32.

⁹⁸ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 52-53.

⁹⁹ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 256.

¹⁰⁰ Hitchens, "Elgin," 81-82.

In this first official request for the return of the Elgin Marbles, Greece argued that the British illegally acquired and damaged the Elgin Marbles, both during their acquisition and during housing at the British Museum. The 1983 official request for return submitted before UNESCO details how the Elgin Marbles were forcibly removed from the monument, cut into slabs for transportation, sawed and hacked into smaller pieces, transported to England during which one shipment sunk to the bottom of the ocean for two years, stored questionably by Lord Elgin before being sold, and then housed in a museum where the oil lamps polluted the air and figures by smoke. In addition to all this, the Elgin Marbles underwent a damaging cleaning process in 1938, though at the time of this first request little was known about the cleaning and its effects.¹⁰¹ In future requests, when more information was discovered, this became a greater issue.

Not only were the Elgin Marbles harmed, but they were illegally acquired according to the 1983 request. The marbles figures were obtained while Greece was under foreign occupation, thus the Greek nation never granted permission for the figures' removal. Though the legality of the marbles' removal and damage done to them was the main focus, the Greeks also argued that the integrity of the Parthenon requires all the Parthenon Marbles to be united on the Parthenon. Furthermore, Greece claimed that they had the technology and ability to care for the marbles, being a sovereign nation that could and should have responsibility over their own objects. On a more general level, though this would become more important later, Greece stated that the Parthenon was a symbol of civilization and democracy and as such should be united as a whole.

In 1984 the British Parliamentary Under-Secretary of the State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs officially declined the 1983 Greek restitution request. Britain countered

¹⁰¹ Walden, 54-56.

Greece's argument with their own, stating that the Elgin Marbles enhanced the fine arts, were legally acquired, are better preserved in the British Museum, were ambassadors for Greece, that the modern Greeks were not the ancestors of these figures, that the integrity argument is impossible, and that return would create a precedent for returning all antiquities and emptying museums. Of all the points that the British made, the strongest were the legal and pollution arguments. At the time of the removal of the Elgin Marbles, Athens was part of the Ottoman Empire and had been since 1460. According to international law of the time, the Ottoman Empire had legal control over the Parthenon, which was public property, so it was under the jurisdiction of the rulers of the time. Thus, the Ottomans did have the ability to grant permission to Lord Elgin to remove the marbles.¹⁰²

This leads to the question of did the Ottoman Empire permit the removal? The original firman (permit) given to Elgin by the Ottoman government allowed for Elgin to "take away any pieces of stone with inscriptions or figures," found on the ground or while excavating.¹⁰³ So initially Elgin did exceed the authority of the firman. This is especially obvious by the recorded amounts of bribes Elgin paid out to the guards of the Parthenon. Despite this illegal extension of power, the firman was twice ratified by the Turkish government. Elgin's excess of authority was legalized post facto by ratification, allowing for the removal and transportation of the marbles, making his actions legal.¹⁰⁴

Even if Greece did want to sue for the Elgin Marble's return, despite their legal acquisition, Greece legally is beyond the statute of limitations to do so. Greece gained its independence in 1828, not long after the Elgin Marbles were shipped to England. Thus, Greece

¹⁰² John Henry Merryman, "Law, Ethics and the Parthenon Marbles," in *The Destiny of the Parthenon Marbles*, ed. Richard Hubbard Howland (Washington, DC: Society for the Preservation of the Greek Heritage, 2000), 68. Merryman, *Thinking*, 37.

¹⁰³ St Clair, Parthenon," 7.

¹⁰⁴ Merryman, *Thinking*, 39.

has been in the position to sue for the Elgin Marbles in court for over a century and a half by the time the first official request for restitution was made. The statute of limitations in Great Britain is six years. By English law, Greece has lost all rights to legal action to recover the Elgin Marbles.¹⁰⁵

Not only is it against the law for Greece to now sue for the Elgin Marbles' return, but it would be illegal for Great Britain to return them. Once bought by the British government, the Elgin Marbles were given to the British Museum and placed under the responsibility of the Museum trustees. These trustees are required by law to preserve the collections in the British Museum,¹⁰⁶ and they are prohibited by legislation from 1963 from removing any part of a collection, with the exception of loans, from under the ownership of the British Museum. It requires an Act of Parliament to give away or sell a collection.¹⁰⁷

B. Preservation and Integrity Argument

Not only did the British rejection show that the acquisition of the Elgin Marbles was legal and the potential return illegal, but the British further argued that the removal of the Elgin Marbles has preserved them from the pollution, lack of technology, and conflict in Greece. The British government argued in their rejection of the Greek proposal that Greece does not have the technology to care for the Elgin Marbles. In the early 1900s the Greeks began to restore the Parthenon under the guidance of civil engineer Nikolaos Balanos. This restoration led to mismatched fragments being forcibly fit together and iron rods being used for support which cracked the marble when rusted,¹⁰⁸ proving Greece's preservation capabilities.

¹⁰⁵ Merryman, *Thinking*, 41.

¹⁰⁶ Walden, 57-58.

¹⁰⁷ Sultans, 104-105.

¹⁰⁸ Jenkins, 34.

Though the Greek Archaeological Service has spent years repairing the damages done to the Parthenon through their lack of preservation knowledge, which could be explained by the knowledge of the times, the deteriorating environment in which the Parthenon exists impedes restoration and preservation as well.¹⁰⁹ As early as the 1960s, acid rain was eating away at the remaining marble of the Parthenon.¹¹⁰ In 1972, a casting of the marbles left on the Acropolis, specifically of the west frieze, showed further deterioration and foreshadowed continued harm to the marbles if exposed to the elements.¹¹¹ In addition to the harmful effects of nature and pollution, Greece's political instability and lack of resources and technology stall restoration and preservation techniques that could have helped protect the marbles from their environment. Given this lack of stability, of technology, and of a habitable environment, the marbles of the Parthenon as a whole, let alone the Elgin Marbles, would not survive the detrimental effects of being displayed in the open air on the Parthenon, according to the British refusal.

Thus, even if Greece was capable of preserving the Elgin Marbles, the marbles would not be able to be replaced on the Parthenon but would have to be housed in a museum. This breaks down the integrity argument made by the Greek's first official request for restitution. The Elgin Marbles will never be able to be placed back onto the Parthenon without their destruction from pollution, so if Greece did get the Elgin Marbles back, they would not be united with the Parthenon to form an integral whole. Also, the return of the Elgin Marbles is not sufficient to restore the integrity of the Parthenon, which would require all its parts to make it whole. The British Museum is not the only museum that possesses fragments of the Parthenon Marbles.

¹⁰⁹ Sultans, 103-104.

¹¹⁰ Jenkins, 34.

¹¹¹ Jenkins, 32.

Piece of the temple are also housed in museums in France, Denmark, Germany, Austria, Italy, and the Vatican.¹¹²

The British denial did agree with the Greeks on one point: the Parthenon Marbles are a symbol of civilization and democracy. The British, however, take this not to mean that the Elgin Marbles should be returned to Greece but that the marbles are ambassadors for Greece in the United Kingdom, bringing the best example of fine art to England as a model of art and culture to teach others.¹¹³ Besides, according to the British, they have just as much right to the Elgin Marbles as the Greeks do, whom they argue are not the true descendants of the ancient Periklean Athenians, given how much time has passed and the numerous foreign occupations. Instead they see themselves as the cultural ancestors of the Periklean Athenians; at the height of culture, art, and politics.

As could be expected, the Greeks did not look kindly upon this response. To counter both the lack of technology and integrity arguments the Greeks held an international architecture competition in May 1989 for a new Acropolis Museum, which had been suggested as a solution to their problem by the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee in 1987.¹¹⁴ By November 1990 Greece awarded an Italian team the winner and decided that the New Acropolis Museum would be built on the Makryianni site.¹¹⁵ The construction plans were completed in 1993, though work on the new museum did not begin until the summer of 2000 due to the unearthing of an archaeological site at the work site.¹¹⁶ Completed in 2007, the New Acropolis Museum is state of the art with all the technologies of a 21st century international museum, according to the

¹¹² Walden, 57-58.

¹¹³ Walden, 57-58.

¹¹⁴ Walden, 59-60.

¹¹⁵ Walden, 60.

¹¹⁶ Sultans, 101.

museum's webpage. Now Greece is capable of preserving the Elgin Marbles with the most up-to-date technology and without the polluting effects of being outside.

Not only does the New Acropolis Museum counter the technology and pollution charges made by the British, but it also solves the problem of maintaining the integrity of the Parthenon while the marbles are housed inside a museum. The top floor, where the Elgin Marbles would be displayed, resembles the setup of the Parthenon and the marbles would be placed as they would have originally appeared on the Parthenon. This allows the Parthenon sculptures to be seen as they were initially conceived to be viewed, as a whole take together as one.¹¹⁷

The integrity is further enhanced by the Elgin Marbles being placed in context. Though the Parthenon Marbles would not actually be replaced on the Parthenon, the display room's walls are made entirely of glass. The display room is located at a height that allows the viewer to look out the windows to the Parthenon. Not only does the display room look out on the Parthenon, but it is situated so that it is at the same angle and setup as the Parthenon, creating a mirror image so that the museum-goer can simultaneously view the Parthenon, the Parthenon sculptures, and the Acropolis as a whole. Believing that they had righted the wrongs that the British had detailed in their denial, the Greeks in 1996, upon finalizing the plans for the museum, once again requested that UNESCO support their plea for restitution. The British delegation, however, continued to refuse the return of the Elgin Marbles, maintaining their previous stance.¹¹⁸

In response to the charge of pollution and insufficient preservation techniques and technology, the Greeks had their own list of allegations concerning the damage the British Museum had inflicted upon the Elgin Marbles. The Elgin Marbles, according to the Greeks, had

¹¹⁷ Christopher Hitchens, "Introduction to *The Parthenon Marbles* (2008)," in *The Parthenon Marbles: The Case for Reunification*, ed. Christopher Hitchens (London and New York: Verso, 2008), xv.

¹¹⁸ Walden, 61.

been harmed by pollution from London and the museum's gas burners, plaster casts, and two major 'cleanings' which drastically altered the marbles. Gas burners were installed in the British Museum around 1859, polluting the air with soot and smoke, staining the marbles and other works of art in the galleries.¹¹⁹ Though this harmed all the works in the galleries, the Elgin Marbles were further damaged when they were molded to make plaster casts, destroying all traces of polychrome from the surface and some of the patina. When this was realized the casting was halted but it was too late for many of the figures.¹²⁰

This travesty is nothing compared to the two following cleaning programs, the first in 1858 and the later in 1937. In 1858, due to his significant donations, Lord Westmacott secured permission from the Trustees to fund a cleaning of the marbles. Westmacott's version of 'cleaning' required that the Elgin Marbles be scrubbed daily with fuller's earth, a gritty clay which eroded the surface of the marbles even more so than the plaster casting did.¹²¹ A second cleaning was undertaken in 1937 upon pressure from Lord Duveen, a generous donor of the museum. Duveen did not consider the Elgin Marbles aesthetically pleasing enough, desiring a more gleaming white, which was how contemporary society thought they originally appeared. When a soap wash did not produce the desired effect, Duveen bribed the workmen to employ the use of copper chisels and carborundum, which is usually used for grinding steel, to whiten the marbles, removing layers of the surface.¹²²

This destructive process was continued for years and when it was discovered by museum authorities, the British Museum and the Trustees made excuses and hid the extent of the damage. All the metopes, half the pedimental figures from the Parthenon as a whole, and 80 to 90 percent

¹¹⁹ St Clair, "Parthenon," 20.

¹²⁰ St Clair, "Parthenon," 22. Sultans, 100-101.

¹²¹ St Clair, "Parthenon," 22-23.

¹²² St Clair, "Parthenon," 25.

of the frieze were damaged before the ‘cleaning’ program was stopped.¹²³ None of the metopes housed in the British Museum have any trace of the patina any longer. Despite damage from the elements and pollution, it is still possible to see traces of paint on some of the marbles remaining in Athens, as well as details such as veins and hair in the sculptures. The Elgin Marbles, though once possessing these attributes as well, have been scourged and these elaborate details have been obliterated.¹²⁴ Upon viewing the ‘cleaned’ Elgin Marbles, Epstein, a writer for *The Times* wrote that the marbles were ‘permanently ruined.’”¹²⁵ The Duveen cleaning, as well as the pollution from the oil burners, the plaster casting, and the 1858 cleaning have led the Greeks to question if the British have the ability to properly care for the Elgin Marbles.

Having turned the tables on the British on the issue of preservation and pollution, the Greeks decided not to also counter the issue of legality but switched to focusing more on the integrity and aesthetic argument. Though the issue of the integrity of the whole had been included in the first official request for restitution, it was in the 1990s that Greece emphasized the aesthetic value of the whole and that the Parthenon’s symbolic importance as a tangible representation of democracy would be strengthened if the monument was seen in its entirety.¹²⁶ For the Parthenon to be properly appreciated and understood, it requires all of its parts to be brought together as one. The separation of its pieces harms the integrity of the Parthenon. The frieze and metopes were never meant to be viewed on their own, separate from the other sculptures and the Parthenon. Only in context can the monument be truly understood and its importance realized.¹²⁷

¹²³ St Clair, *Lord*, 308-309.

¹²⁴ Hitchens, “Introduction,” xiv.

¹²⁵ St Clair, *Lord*, 300.

¹²⁶ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 262.

¹²⁷ Sultans, 98.

C. Cultural Heritage Argument

For the Greeks, this unrealized importance and significance that the Parthenon symbolizes when taken as a whole is part of their national cultural heritage. This argument of national cultural heritage is the most drastic change in the Greek argument as it has evolved since the first official proposal for the return of the Elgin Marbles. Just as the Parthenon once symbolized what it meant to be Athenian in fifth century BC Athens, giving the ancient Athenians a continuous national narrative and national identity, the Parthenon today is a tangible representation of Greek nationalism and history. The Parthenon is a unifying symbol of the contemporary Greek national narrative, which is based on democracy and a heroic classical past. As Greek Minister Melina Mercouri said, “the people of Greece came to regard the Parthenon as the ‘soul of Greece.’”¹²⁸ The notion of cultural heritage and the Greek connection to the Parthenon in particular are complex and multifaceted and will be elaborated on in the following chapters, providing deeper insight into the importance of the Elgin Marbles to both the Greeks and the British, further complicating the issue of restitution by focusing attention on this particular aspect of the debate and all the implications it holds.

In response, the British moved away from the integrity argument, as the New Acropolis Museum swayed the debate in the Greek’s favor. Instead, the British emphasized their distribution argument, stating that the return of the Elgin Marbles would create a precedent for return that would bleed the international museums dry of all their collections. Depriving international museums of their collections would have disastrous effects, for these museums allow collections to be available to a wider public than if all Greek antiquities were only located

¹²⁸ St Clair, *Lord*, 325.

in Greece.¹²⁹ After all, it is not like Greece is impoverished in terms of their antiquities. According to the British, objects of cultural heritage should not be housed in one place but distributed to give access to all. Also, by being displayed in the British Museum, the Elgin Marbles are presented in a place where they can be compared and put into context with other collections from neighboring regions, like Egypt, Anatolia, and Mesopotamia. As the British Museum curator Jonathan Williams said to the *Washington Post*, it is an “important opportunity for different stories about this monument to be told.”¹³⁰

Though the British countered the integrity issue with their distributional argument, their more recent responses mirror the Greeks and focus on the new cultural heritage argument. They tackle this issue both from a national and world standpoint. The British believe that even if the Elgin Marbles are a part of Greece’s national cultural heritage, they also play a role in British national cultural heritage. The Elgin Marbles have been in London for over two centuries now, influencing British cultural heritage, especially since the British view themselves as the cultural ancestors of the Ancient Greeks. Yet the British also argue that the Elgin Marbles are part of world heritage as well. The Elgin Marbles and the Parthenon as a whole are symbols of western civilization and democracy. By displaying the Elgin Marbles in a world museum, they are placed above nationalistic claims and are available to all in context to the rest of the world.¹³¹ Thus, the British connection to the Elgin Marbles is just as multifaceted an issue as it is for the Greeks.

The cultural heritage argument can be applied by both Greece and Britain, as well as by the world at large. All sides hold merit while being open to criticism. It is necessary to

¹²⁹ Sultans, 97.

¹³⁰ Hitchens, “Introduction,” xvi.

¹³¹ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 263.

understand this issue in all of its complexity to truly realize how cultural heritage affects the Elgin Marble debate.

Chapter 3: The Colonization of Cultural Heritage

A. Materializing Cultural Heritage

It is the tangibility of cultural heritage objects that enables them to represent cultural heritage, creating a visible link to the past that connects a person back to their cultural identity; be it world, national, regional, or personal cultural identity. Cultural heritage and identity are part of an ideological sphere. They are ephemeral, fluid, and immaterial. It is through cultural heritage objects that place, time, history, and identity are materialized. It is their ability to cement the past in corporal form that imbues them with the symbolic power, “It is thus material, sensory, and experimental properties and attributes of antiquities that make them not just indispensable but rather essential in the production of the nation,”¹³² as well as of world, regional, and personal identity. It is through an object’s tangibility that it holds and triggers cultural memories for the viewer. “Cultural objects are the basis of cultural memory,”¹³³ meaning that these objects represent and symbolize the past in such a way that viewing them elicits cultural memories, influencing and being influenced by the viewer’s world, national, regional, and personal cultural identity.

Besides generating memories, cultural heritage objects, through their materialization, evoke pathos, prompting “nostalgia for the people, events, and cultures that produced them.”¹³⁴ Thus, cultural objects foster a sense of community. The memory and emotional connection to other people and cultures link people together through a shared ancestry or cultural connection, nourishing a “sense of community, of participation in a common human enterprise.”¹³⁵

¹³² Hamilakis, *Nation*, 293.

¹³³ Merryman, *Thinking*, 103.

¹³⁴ Merryman, *Thinking*, 104.

¹³⁵ Merryman, *Thinking*, 105.

The physicality of cultural heritage objects also unites the past with the present, as the object comes from the past but exists in and is influenced by the present. Through this physicality, this connection between the past and the present, and this evoking of memory, emotion, and community, cultural heritage objects represent cultural identity (be it world, national, regional, or personal cultural identity). Cultural identity is an essential part to people's sense of belonging, "for a sense of significance, for reassurance about one's place in the scheme of things, for a 'legible' past, for answers to the great existential questions about our nature and our fate."¹³⁶ Cultural heritage objects represent a heritage in which people can find answers, connections, pride, and even reminders of societal errors and lessons.

Yet who owns this heritage and the associated cultural heritage objects? The issue of cultural heritage is complicated by the reminder that there are four types of heritage, all of which interrelate and overlap: world, national, regional, and individual.¹³⁷ A cultural heritage object that is a prominent symbol for one country's national identity, can also hold symbolism for another country, the world, a specific region in the country, or even for a simple individual.

It also must be remembered, that cultural heritage objects are not only from the past, but they exist and are influenced by the present. Not every antiquity is a cultural heritage object. Cultural heritage objects are specifically chosen because they hold symbolism that pertains to the nation, world, region, or individual. The cultural heritage associations linked to cultural heritage objects are "woven into our lives through personal and collective memory, becomes a testimony to the past—a past, however, that reflects current theories of history and culture."¹³⁸ Cultural heritage is a production of contemporary times, influenced by present biases and political agendas.

¹³⁶ Merryman, *Thinking*, 105.

¹³⁷ Sabine Marschall, "The Heritage of Post-Colonial Societies," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*, ed. Brian Graham and Peter Howard (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008), 359.

¹³⁸ Eleni Bastea, "Dimitris Pikionis and Sedad Eldem: Parallel Reflections of Vernacular and National Archaeology," in *The Usable Past: Greek Metahistories*, ed. K.S. Brown and Yannis Hamilakis (New York and Oxford: Lexington Books, 2003), 147.

Whatever importance the object held in the past may still exist, but it is adapted to fit the current needs of whomever is using the object as a representation of their past. Cultural heritage is a complex and multifaceted notion, “involving the past, contemporary social understandings of places, and the active construction of the past,”¹³⁹ that is further complicated by the fact that this understanding and construction of the past might be different on world, national, regional, and individual levels, which could all feel a connection to the same cultural heritage object but in different ways.

B. Individual and Regional Cultural Heritage

The least amount of scholarship is on the micro level of cultural heritage: regional and individual. Cultural heritage and the objects that represent this heritage give an individual a sense of belonging and unify a community based on a shared heritage, thus operating on the regional and individual level at the same time. Connections to the past, and to the culture and people associated with that past, help “save present-day people from their alienating feelings, establishing a collective embodied identity in a chaotic world.”¹⁴⁰ Through this connection to the past, cultural heritage helps shape individual and local identity. Our past, who we are, and where we came from are all aspects of our identities, both our individual identities and our local ones, which simultaneously influence each other.

Cultural heritage objects do not only banish alienation, they are also part of an individual’s and region’s identity by making up the landscape in which they live. Though many cultural heritage objects are housed in museums, others exist in the environment, creating the landscape

¹³⁹ Uzi Baram and Yorke Rowan, “Archaeology After Nationalism: Globalization and the Consumption of the Past,” in *Marketing Heritage: Archaeology and the Consumption of the Past*, ed. Yorke Rowman and Uzi Baram (New York and Oxford: Altamira Press, 2004), 5.

¹⁴⁰ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 147.

of our daily lives. Monuments like the Eiffel Tower, Big Ben, the Parthenon, and the Coliseum are cultural heritage monuments but they are also part of the local environment and influence the memories and experiences of individuals and the local community, affecting individual and community identity. Humans remember most life events by fitting them together into a logical narrative. Similarly, “we cannot recall our memories of the built environment unless we are able to integrate them into a coherent narrative. This narrative may reflect personal and family experiences, school instruction, social exchanges, and national and international events and rhetoric.”¹⁴¹ Thus, cultural heritage objects and sites influence people’s identities on an individual and local level through people’s engagement with them in their lives. These objects are part of people’s memories and experiences, playing a role in how people view themselves and the world around them.

Yet, as the quote also reveals, the monuments and objects are also subject to the influences, experiences, and biases of those who view them, taking these objects and imbuing them with symbolism, which is biased by other human events and ideologies. Cultural heritage does not only affect individual and local identities, but it is also affected by the individual and the region. The past symbolized by these cultural heritage objects is a biased past. These objects have cultural heritage value because society and individuals believe that they embody history, memories, and experiences which have been tainted by “both individual preconceptions and national ideologies.”¹⁴² What a viewer of these objects believes will impact how he views the object and how much significance the object holds for him. Cultural heritage objects did not come into being with this symbolism as part of their essence, but rather, they are given this

¹⁴¹ Bastea, 166-167.

¹⁴² Bastea, 147.

importance by the viewer. Without the viewer, these objects are devoid of their cultural heritage significance.

C. National Cultural Heritage

The influence of and on cultural heritage and heritage objects extends past the regional and individual level, playing a crucial role in national cultural heritage, which helps create and symbolize national identity. As discussed in the first chapter, a nation and national identity require the formation of Benedict Anderson's 'imagined community,' which unite under a common, continuous national narrative. Cultural heritage objects are the tangible representation of this shared narrative, helping to define the nation and what it means to be a citizen in that nation. Nationalism relies on its historical past to foster pride in a heroic antiquity and to create a continuous, timeless narrative.¹⁴³

It is not sufficient, however, to simply have this past, but it must be materialized in tangible form, providing a visible link to the past through "essential emblems, images, and material landmarks that define the *topos* of the nation."¹⁴⁴ It is the symbolism behind cultural heritage objects, sites, and monuments that "objectify the nation, and give it the potency of the real, the eternal, and the authentic."¹⁴⁵ The authenticity that the physicality of the cultural heritage objects provides materializes the essence of the nation. The ephemerality of the idea of a nation, of the past, of a continuous national narrative, is made concrete through cultural heritage objects, making them a crucial part in the formulation of an imagined nation and "the primary symbolic capital of the country."¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 15.

¹⁴⁴ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 16.

¹⁴⁵ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 86.

¹⁴⁶ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 51.

National cultural heritage objects also promote nationalism through fostering a sense of unity and wholeness. Though cultural heritage saves an individual from alienation by connecting individuals to their ancestors and past, it also saves them by connecting them to those in their community and their nation at large. Cultural heritage objects help give a definition to a culture, a definition which all those partaking in that culture can relate to, joining those people together through a shared national cultural identity, forming a community.¹⁴⁷ Creating one united community thus creates a whole nation. The formulation of a nation functions off “*the nostalgia for the whole*, the desire for completeness, the longing for reunification, for recollecting and mending the fragments of the national body.”¹⁴⁸ This desire for wholeness, for a singular complete nation, which cultural objects help inspire, is a central reason why many nations are requesting the return of certain antiquities. Not only are cultural heritage objects part of the nation and its history, preventing wholeness with their absence, but they also inspire wholeness through uniting the community by tangibly representing the nation which all citizens can relate to.

Just as individuals and regions impact cultural heritage and how cultural objects are viewed, so too does nationalism. Cultural heritage objects do not only facilitate nationalism, but they are influenced by the nation. Their importance in the past not only imbues them with significance in the national imagination now, but also how that past is viewed or how the nation wants that past to be viewed changes how it is portrayed, adapting the cultural heritage objects to the nation’s agenda. Yet this adaption is also crucial for the imagining of the nation. The nation is continuously being produced and reproduced, fluidly changing as the nation and its morals alter throughout time. It is through biased adaption that a continuous national narrative can be

¹⁴⁷ Merryman, *Thinking*, 53.

¹⁴⁸ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 282.

formed. Instead of breaking with the past, the nation incorporates past accomplishments and events, “incorporated[ing] these feelings and attitudes, establishing at the same time a genealogical link: these feats are now the feats of the ancestors.”¹⁴⁹

Not every event of the past, however, is included in the national narrative. Only aspects of the past that unite the nation and cultivate pride and nationalism are written into the narrative. In addition to this reimagined history, the national narrative is continually updated and reconstructed to fit alterations in the nation. The national narratives that cultural heritage objects represent and inspire may not be completely factual, but they do unite the nation under a singular past in which the citizens can take pride.

D. World Cultural Heritage

Yet the importance of cultural heritage objects extends past the national level, having reached a global significance in the last few decades. The idea of world cultural heritage gained prominence after the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. The Hague Convention propagated the idea that all cultural heritages are the heritage of a common mankind and it is the responsibility of all to preserve this heritage. World cultural heritage takes objects’ origins and present location, property rights, and national jurisdiction out of the equation.¹⁵⁰ Instead, world cultural heritage relies upon three determining factors to decide where a cultural heritage object should reside: preservation, integrity, and distribution.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 290.

¹⁵⁰ Merryman, *Thinking*, 67. Merryman, “Law,” 76.

¹⁵¹ Merryman, “Law,” 76.

Preservation means that the object should be located where it will be preserved best, keeping it safe for future generations to view, learn from, and connect to. World cultural heritage, just as national cultural heritage, sees the importance of cultural heritage on people's identities and that a connection to their heritage is essential for a full, complete life in which they can unite with others under a shared heritage. The only major difference is that world cultural heritage means that all heritages together as one can unite all of mankind beyond a nationalistic basis. This is why the preservation of heritage and heritage objects is one of the three determining factors in the debate over who owns cultural objects.

The second factor, integrity, refers to the wholeness of the object. Cultural objects lose their significance and wholeness when they are decontextualized, becoming anonymous once separated from their context. Objects that are a part of a greater whole are viewed out of context, no longer being seen as they were meant to be seen, possibly destroying their symbolism by not being viewed within the larger framework of their existence. Not only do the fragments lose their importance, but so too does the larger work.¹⁵² If parts are taken from a larger monument or site, then both the beauty of the monument and its powerful symbolic meaning are diminished. When the pieces apart are less than the whole, then restitution is required. Many, however, are critical of this second determining factor in cultural heritage object's residency. Integrity is considered a Byronic sentiment that merely desires to keep an object in a country because it was made there.¹⁵³ This has led to the integrity factor being overruled by either of the other two factors if integrity hinders preservation or access to the objects.

Access to cultural heritage objects is what the distribution factor deals with. Proponents of world cultural heritage worry over the appropriate distribution of cultural heritage

¹⁵² Merryman, *Thinking*, 113.

¹⁵³ Merryman, *Thinking*, 114.

internationally, giving access of these objects to as many people as possible and not retaining them all in one place.¹⁵⁴ Those who support world cultural heritage are critical of national cultural heritage, which would hoard cultural objects in a single country, where domestic museums already have substantial collections and are warehousing many valuable objects, which go unseen. World cultural heritage does not want to impoverish a country of their cultural objects, but it does want to ensure that peoples in other parts of the world are not impoverished of a heritage common and significant to all.¹⁵⁵

Yet the distribution factor is not concerned merely with impoverishing museums and countries of cultural objects, but also with where is best suited to care for the object. Retention of cultural objects by the source country means nothing without protective measures. Retention may be best if the source country has the ability to preserve the object, but if retention endangers the object through a lack of technology, pollution, or violence, then retention is a moot point as the object will not likely survive. Thus, object orientation at times can and should override nationalism motives, like if staying in the host country means a lack of preservation or ownership by a private collector opposed to being preserved and studied in an international museum.¹⁵⁶

It is through displaying cultural objects in international museums (museums with collections from all over the world) that distribution is possible. Distribution allows for more people and countries to view other cultures' cultural objects, informing them and fostering tolerance through this education. International museums put different nations' cultural objects in context to one another, showing how multiple cultures are pieces of a greater common world heritage.¹⁵⁷ Cultural objects are displayed in a greater world context, serving as ambassadors for

¹⁵⁴ Merryman, *Thinking*, 59-61.

¹⁵⁵ Merryman, *Thinking*, 84-85.

¹⁵⁶ Merryman, *Thinking*, 150 and 165.

¹⁵⁷ Jenkins, 9.

their source countries. By showcasing cultural objects in a setting that places artifacts from different cultures together in one place in relation to each other, world museums allow for the telling of a greater story of all of humanity's achievements by comparing different cultural accomplishments.¹⁵⁸

In this way, international museums serve as encyclopedias of the cultural heritage of all mankind, unifying different cultural collections as a whole in context to each other where no culture is privileged but instead cultures inform and are informed by each other. Rather than privileging one nation or culture, as national cultural heritage does, world heritage transcends nationalism to create a universal, ideal, timeless humanity.¹⁵⁹ It is through distribution and international museums that this tolerant, unifying version of cultural heritage is possible. By sharing cultural heritage across countries and continents, and by housing cultural objects in international museums in context to other cultures, world cultural heritage promotes tolerance through the sharing of information, promoting an understanding of difference.

World cultural heritage is similar to national cultural heritage, with the influence cultural heritage has on identity remaining the central focus of all four kinds of cultural heritage. However, national and world cultural heritage, despite their similar emphasis on cultural identity, clash spectacularly. The difference is a matter of ownership: who owns the cultural objects if everyone is connected to everyone else's' cultural heritages? National cultural heritage believes that the cultural objects are property of the nation, symbolizing and influencing their national narratives and identity. World cultural heritage, however, functions off the premise that "the making and understanding of one culture informs and is informed by knowledge of others."¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 270. Jenkins, 12.

¹⁵⁹ Jenkins, 7-11.

¹⁶⁰ Jenkins, 18.

All culture heritages are part of the cultural heritage of mankind. By sharing this culture heritage across countries and continents, and by housing cultural objects in international museums in context to other cultures, world cultural heritage promotes tolerance through the distribution of information.

E. Colonial and Postcolonial Discourses in Relation to Cultural Heritage

This tolerance, however, is questionable, especially in light of colonial and postcolonial discourses on the creation and recreation of cultural identities. To further ascertain the importance of cultural heritage on identity we must turn to colonial and post-colonial discourses on cultural identity, which both warn against and support the effects of national and global cultural heritage when used for imperialistic and capitalistic ends. The importance of cultural heritage objects on national heritage and national identity is perhaps seen best in colonial and postcolonial uses of cultural objects in the creation of colonial and postcolonial identities. The national narrative and use of cultural objects is always biased, but this shaping of the past can have oppressive effects, especially in a colonial context. Heritage and cultural objects have been manipulated by colonizers to support and justify their imperialism by archaeologically proving the superiority of their own culture, reinforcing their control by emphasizing the inferiority of the colonized.¹⁶¹ This oppression reshapes the colonized's national identity, annihilating their pride and sense of self.

For example, in Zimbabwe, British and Portuguese colonists, controlling the cultural heritage objects of the area and the past they symbolize, stifled Zimbabwe pride and nationalism

¹⁶¹ Matthew Liebmann, "Introduction: The Intersections of Archaeology and Postcolonial Studies," in *Archaeology and The Postcolonial Critique*, ed. Matthew Liebmann and Uzma Z. Rizvi (New York: Altamira Press, 2008), 6-7.

by attributing the construction of the ancient stone house (zimbabwe) to the Phoenicians.¹⁶² By accrediting a white civilization with the construction of an ancient architectural wonder, the colonizers deprived the indigenous peoples of Zimbabwe of all agency.¹⁶³ Through the manipulation of cultural heritage objects, colonizers deny the heritage of the colonized, taking away their agency and advocating their inferiority. The colonized has no voice in his own history and heritage, no control over his own identity. Zimbabwe and states like it were not only being colonized in the typical sense of the word, but culturally colonized as well.

This distortion of cultural heritage does not only mold the national identity of the colonized, but it also affects the national identity of the colonizers. Those British and Portuguese colonists were not only shaping Zimbabwe national identity, but their own as well. Controlling the cultural heritage objects and sites of Zimbabwe adversely affected Zimbabwe national identity, but it boosted British and Portuguese national identity by proving their superiority, thus justifying their colonization and oppression.¹⁶⁴

The belief in the supremacy of one's own culture condones colonization by creating an 'other' that is culturally inferior and in need of western development. The political empire is mirrored by a cultural empire, where *our* culture is better than *their* culture, 'othering' the colonized and supporting colonization through a western projection of binaries. This supremacy in culture is materialized and supported by cultural objects, so that cultural objects take on new significance under colonization as markers for distinguishing civilized western culture from the 'other.' Western empires and the west at large use cultural objects to maintain the 'other,' thus maintaining their sense of superiority.

¹⁶² Liebmann, 7.

¹⁶³ Liebmann, 7.

¹⁶⁴ Liebmann, 7.

The west has a tendency to view life through binaries, an us versus them approach, which is part of an imperialistic agenda to emphasize how *we* are superior to *them* while at the same time attempting to mask the ‘other’ with western ideologies and culture, supporting all this through cultural objects. The national identity of the colonizers, specifically of European countries, was and is defined by colonialism just as much, though with different affects, as the colonized’s national identity.¹⁶⁵

Cultural heritage can both be utilized to enforce oppression and break colonial bonds, reasserting the colonized’s agency and culture. Cultural heritage objects can help deconstruct the subjugation that they were previously manipulated to represent by symbolizing a new national identity and history which counters the colonial one.¹⁶⁶ This new definition of national identity and history post-colonization focuses on the decolonization of their heritage and self-representation.¹⁶⁷ At the beginning of the newly independent nation, the once colonized tend to target colonial monuments, often destroying or defacing objects representing their colonized past.¹⁶⁸ The next step in the process of creating the decolonized national identity includes new heritage and conservation projects, taking pride in an ancient past and linking the citizens together, constructing a continuous national narrative that glorifies their past and jumps over the horrors of colonization. This destruction of the colonial heritage and its replacement with cultural heritage objects infused with newfound symbolism is not only emotionally driven but

¹⁶⁵ Rodney Harrison and Lotte Hughes, “Heritage, Colonialism and Postcolonialism,” In *Understanding the Politics of Heritage* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2010), 235.

¹⁶⁶ PraVeenna Gullapalli, “Heterogeneous Encounters: Colonial Histories and Archaeological Experiences,” in *Archaeology and The Postcolonial Critique*, ed. Matthew Liebmann and Uzma Z. Rizvi (New York: Altamira Press, 2008), 51. Liebmann, 8.

¹⁶⁷ Marschall, 350.

¹⁶⁸ Marschall, 349.

“psychological imperative,”¹⁶⁹ to the regaining of agency and sovereignty wrested from the colonized by colonization.

In contrast to Zimbabwe, which demonstrates how cultural heritage objects can be used and misused by the colonizers, India shows how cultural heritage can deconstruct colonial heritage and support a new national narrative. Through archaeology and cultural heritage objects, India produced evidence of their antiquity, an antiquity in which they could be proud of and unite under, which had been denied to them by the oppressive colonial narrative. Cultural heritage objects thus challenged the colonizers’ theories of the colonized’s inferiority and uncivilized past. Instead of subjugating the Indians, cultural heritage objects began to be used to shed light on the Indus Civilization and all its wonders.¹⁷⁰ With the emergence of this history and the newfound independence, archaeological narratives and cultural heritage objects became the foundation for the new national narrative,¹⁷¹ breaking free from the oppressive chains of colonization and fostering nationalism. Post-colonization India resisted the ‘othering’ enforced by colonization. Though the national cultural heritage that sprang up after colonization does create an ‘other’ as well by making all other nations ‘other’ in relation to the newly defined state, this is common amongst nations, where each nation views itself as separate and sovereign, thus creating balance opposed to oppressing as colonial ‘othering’ does.

This likewise occurred in many African nation’s post-colonization, where new national narratives did not only need to be constructed in order to deconstruct the colonial ones, but each nation also had to create a unified nation, which did not exist pre-colonization, but were rather a multitude of separate tribes. Once independent, “A unified national identity first had to be

¹⁶⁹ Marschall, 350.

¹⁷⁰ Gullapalli, 46.

¹⁷¹ Gullapalli, 47.

invented, strategically eliding histories of hostility and ethnic division in pursuit of peace and nation-building... state-sponsored heritage could be utilized to define, endorse and publicly disseminate the new identity construct and accompanying value systems.”¹⁷² The importance of a biased utopian history for the creation of nationalism and national identity through a continuous national narrative that unites the community and cultivates pride is just as essential in the reshaping of national identity post-colonialism. Thus, post-colonial national heritage in African nations does not simply obliterate the remnants of the colonial past, but cultural heritage and its associated objects unite the nation through an improvised national narrative, which ignores certain parts of the past to move past old hostilities and suggest a unity that did not actually previously exist.

As India and Africa exemplify, cultural heritage objects are used in post-colonized nations to represent a new national identity, devoid of their colonial heritage and emphasizing self-representation, agency, and pride in their nation, uniting the citizens together. The once colonized nations suffer from an anxiety to deconstruct colonial influences and to become a united, whole, sovereign nation. This desire for wholeness, “*the nostalgia for the whole*,”¹⁷³ is what spurs the nation to unify. Yet being a singular community is not sufficient for the nation to be whole, especially for a nation recovering from colonization. Though certain cultural heritage objects are utilized to symbolize and represent the new national narrative and heritage, other cultural heritage objects have been taken or lost, in particular during the time of colonization. To regain and recreate their sense of self, their independence, and their wholeness, post-colonized nations seek the repatriation of important cultural objects.¹⁷⁴ To fully regain control over their

¹⁷² Marschall, 354.

¹⁷³ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 282.

¹⁷⁴ Marschall, 348.

own history and identity, post-colonized nations need to control their own cultural objects, for these objects enable nations to shed the bonds of colonial oppression and enforced identity, instead creating and symbolizing a new national narrative for the recently freed state.

F. Soft Power Cultural Colonization

Though colonization shows the negative ways cultural objects can be used to influence cultural, national, and personal identity, especially national identity, it may be argued that contemporary society is past the era of colonization so that colonial and postcolonial discourses on cultural identity are irrelevant in the current debate on whether national or world cultural heritage is more relevant in deciding cultural objects' residency. Modern society, however, is not past the era of cultural colonization. Though cultural heritage objects can be used to break colonial oppression, they can also be used by the Western powers as a new form of colonization, a soft power form of colonization through the control, possession, and research published on cultural objects, colonizing and oppressing the so-called 'Other' by controlling their heritage and how it is viewed. By supporting world cultural heritage, Westerners, who are its main proponents, are destroying diversity by preaching a common heritage to all of mankind, which in actuality is a Eurocentric common heritage. Western proponents of world cultural heritage claims that it "represent[s] a timeless humanity, one which transcends the present to encompass a universal vision of an ideal society."¹⁷⁵ Yet what ideal? A Western ideal?

Diversity and difference in cultural heritage is what imbues individuals with a sense of self, nations with sovereignty, and the world with richness. Just as the environment requires biodiversity to be sustainable, culture needs diversity as well, otherwise, if all cultures are

¹⁷⁵ Jenkins, 11.

consumed by one Western notion of culture, then the world loses its diverse riches, nations their sovereignty, and individuals their sense of self. One common cultural heritage for all of mankind is a form of soft power colonization, culturally colonizing the 'other' to a western ideology of a common culture, for it is the west that supports this idea of common world heritage. By ignoring cultural differences, world cultural heritage prioritizes western cultural values, like democracy, capitalism, and globalization.

The common heritage of all mankind, like national narratives, only includes cultural objects and histories that fit this western ideology, ignoring and adapting other cultures to conform to this heritage, thus eliminating the 'other's' control over their history and excluding them from their cultural legacy by the west controlling how their heritage is part of world heritage. As shown in the example of colonized Zimbabwe, nations and individuals require the agency to define their own cultural heritage in order to create a non-oppressive national and personal identity. Yet agency is limited by world heritage, which hinders nations from producing their own heritage if it clashes with the western common world heritage. Thus, rather than controlling their culture, non-western nations are culturally colonized by a Eurocentric world culture, which accepts the aspects of their cultures that fit western ideology and ignores the differences.

World cultural heritage has been resisted by non-Western countries, opposing the universal standards that world cultural heritage imposes, believing them to be more Western than universal. Resistance against the Eurocentric idea of world cultural heritage grew strong enough that many non-Western nations attended the Nara Convention in Japan in 1994 to emphasize the need to culturally determine how to treat and preserve heritage, going on a culture to culture

basis.¹⁷⁶ Cultural objects cannot be viewed all together from a world cultural heritage standpoint, because by their nature alone, cultural heritage objects help “to preserve the identity of specific cultures... help[ing] the world preserve texture and diversity.”¹⁷⁷ UNESCO also responded to world cultural heritage in the 1990s, fearing that “globalization is antithetical to the survival of cultural diversity.”¹⁷⁸ In their Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, UNESCO claimed that cultural diversity is “‘as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature’... There is a richness in the world worth keeping.”¹⁷⁹ This richness preserves the cultural differences of other individuals, regions, and nations, which makes them and their identities unique.

Globalization is weakening nationalism, advocating the supremacy of global forces, consuming both nationalism and cultural heritage.¹⁸⁰ World cultural heritage, like globalization, is forcing the world together as one, yet it is doing so from a Eurocentric standpoint, supporting a Western ideology of what this one common heritage should be. This way of viewing heritage eradicates diversity, which promotes tolerance through difference, not tolerance through ignoring difference. It is necessary in the debate between national and world cultural heritage to be aware of colonial and postcolonial cultural identity discourses, for the ‘othering’ of world cultural heritage must be resisted. Though the ‘other’ does exist in national cultural heritage, with each nation seeing itself as different from the others, each nation does this, creating balance, but if the western ideology of world heritage takes hold, implementing a Eurocentric common heritage for all mankind, then there is no balance, only soft power colonization.

¹⁷⁶ Helaine Silverman and D. Fairchild Ruggles, “Cultural Heritage and Human Rights,” in *Cultural Heritage and Human Rights*, ed. Helaine Silverman and D. Fairchild Ruggles (New York: Springer, 2007), 4.

¹⁷⁷ Merryman, “Law,” 74.

¹⁷⁸ William Logan, “Closing Pandora’s Box: Human Rights Conundrums in Cultural Heritage Protection,” in *Cultural Heritage and Human Rights*, ed. Helaine Silverman and D. Fairchild Ruggles (New York: Springer, 2007), 36.

¹⁷⁹ Logan, “Closing,” 36-37.

¹⁸⁰ Baram, 3-5.

G. Cultural Heritage as Terrorism and a Human Right

As colonialism, post-colonialism, and soft power colonialism show, cultural heritage objects can be utilized for both liberating and oppressive ends. For a nation, cultural heritage can be manipulated to both foster nationalism and to psychologically oppress a nation through cultural terrorism. Cultural terrorism is any act of terrorism “that strives to erase the cultural heritage of ‘the other,’”¹⁸¹ be it by destruction, defacement, or scholarly control over publications, as seen by colonization. The potential cultural heritage objects have to influence cultural identity makes the destruction of cultural heritage objects cultural terrorism.¹⁸² UNESCO’s Declaration Concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage (2003) goes so far as to claim that “‘cultural heritage is an important component of the cultural identity of communities, groups and individuals, and or social cohesion, so that its intentional destruction may have adverse consequences on human dignity and human rights.’”¹⁸³

Cultural heritage can be used as a form of psychological warfare by colonizers who use cultural heritage to support and justify their imperialism or by terrorists who want to elicit fear and self-doubt in a nation. Foreign relations and politics now use cultural heritage and its objects as pawns on an international chessboard to promote violence, terrorism, and political agendas.¹⁸⁴ The destruction of cultural heritage objects and sites leads to the erosion of cultural identity, especially on the national level, psychologically impacting the nation through cultural terrorism. Terrorists exploit the symbolic significance of cultural heritage objects by targeting them and

¹⁸¹ Erik. Nemeth, “Cultural Security: The Evolving Role of Art in International Security,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19 (2007): 19.

¹⁸² Nemeth, 34.

¹⁸³ Silverman, 5.

¹⁸⁴ Nemeth, 22.

publically damaging them, seeking to gain international political attention and to inspire fear and doubt.¹⁸⁵

These double motives of both inflicting psychological terrorism and of achieving political attention, is seen in the Taliban's destruction of the giant Buddhas of the Bamiyan Valley in Afghanistan. The initial threat of destruction gained worldwide media attention, motivating international diplomatic efforts attempting to dissuade the Taliban. To further garner attention and to psychologically enforce their religious supremacy, culturally terrorizing those that stood against them, the Taliban did destroy the giant Buddhas, despite diplomacy efforts to prevent the wanton destruction.¹⁸⁶

Thus, the influence cultural heritage and its objects has on national identity and the possibility of utilizing it to colonize, oppress, and terrorize, leads not only to the need for cultural security (like Homeland Security or domestic security) but also to viewing cultural heritage and cultural identity, as well as the objects associated with them, as human rights. The lack of tolerance for the 'other' and their culture, which leads to the destruction and manipulation of that culture and its symbolic objects, represses minority groups and adversely affects national identity and culture. Heritage recognizes that individual, group, and national identities must be respected and preserved, promoting tolerance, and it is one of the reasons that it should be a human right. Cultural heritage is a fundamental human right also because it is essential for mankind and nations to maintain and articulate their own identity, determining their own life, culture, and environment. This preserves cultural diversity and both personal and national agency.¹⁸⁷ Thus the extreme influence cultural heritage and its objects have on identity and the significance of

¹⁸⁵ Nemeth, 22.

¹⁸⁶ Nemeth, 22-23.

¹⁸⁷ Silverman, 5 and 11. William Logan, "Cultural Diversity, Heritage and Human Rights," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*, ed. Brian Graham and Peter Howard (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008), 439.

controlling one's own identity makes cultural heritage and the control of cultural heritage objects a human right.

The belief that cultural heritage is an essential human right is not new however. In 1948 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, in Article 27, that “‘Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.’ This article, in particular, introduced the idea that culture was an aspect of human rights.”¹⁸⁸ Though Article 27 began the process of viewing cultural heritage as a human right, it ignored the different kinds of heritage and the conflict between them in deciding where cultural objects should reside.¹⁸⁹ Yet if the effects of colonization and cultural terrorism on national identity show anything, it is the need to realize the potential harmful, imperialistic effects of world cultural heritage on national cultural identity.

Yet it must also be realized in this debate between national and world cultural heritage that both have their positives and negatives. Both of these heritages play significant roles in the creation of identity, yet they both also are open to criticism. National cultural heritage and its associated cultural objects influence and are shaped by national identity, uniting a nation and composing a continuous national narrative. This nationalistic view on cultural heritage, however, ignores international cultural interactions and relations. In a global world, different nations and cultures affect each other and share common ancestry and culture at times, linking cultures together. The effect of these international cultural relations leads to cultural heritage objects holding significance to more than one culture or nation, which national cultural heritage ignores.

A too global view though also has its faults. World cultural heritage is a product of Western ideology centered upon globalization, capitalism, and Eurocentricism. While sharing

¹⁸⁸ Silverman, 4.

¹⁸⁹ Silverman, 4.

information and culture worldwide, world cultural heritage is also at risk of sponsoring a singular Western ideology of the culture of mankind. Though international museums can promote tolerance through unifying cultures by putting them into context with each other, world cultural heritage functions off the belief that there is singular cultural heritage linking all of mankind, which is a product of Western ideology. In reality, this is a soft power form of colonization by which the West can justify and support their supremacy over the ‘other,’ creating a cultural narrative based on globalization, capitalism, and Western culture, biasedly ignoring cultural differences to propagate a Eurocentric world cultural heritage.

H. Capitalizing and Commoditizing Cultural Heritage

As stated, western cultural heritage supports capitalism and globalization, which is another critique of this ideology. One effect of capitalism on cultural heritage is the commoditization of cultural heritage objects, for “The marketing of heritage takes the unique and universalizes it as a commodity.”¹⁹⁰ By capitalizing and globalizing cultural objects, world cultural heritage diminishes the significance of these objects by commoditizing them with a price tag and displaying them as art in a Western context. The importance of cultural objects becomes less about its influence on cultural identity and more about consumption. Cultural heritage objects have price tags attached to them. They are a form of wealth and there is a market for them.¹⁹¹ The symbolism and cultural heritage significance associated with cultural heritage objects, which are an essential part to cultural identity (be it world, national, local, or individual) so should be priceless, have been deemed worthy of a certain price under the rule of capitalism. Everything has a price and can be bought or sold, at least by capitalistic standards. By giving a

¹⁹⁰ Baram, 6.

¹⁹¹ Merryman, *Thinking*, 110-111.

monetary value to cultural heritage objects, capitalism ignores and even oppresses these objects' significance and purpose. They become simply another commodity on the market. The emphasis at museums and sites to arrange and organize objects and information for tourist accessibility rather than for nationalism is clear evidence of valuing consumption over historical presentation.¹⁹²

With cultural heritage objects being allotted monetary value, they become another resource on the market for sale, and "cultural property in many source nations is a resource that could, like other resources, be developed, managed, and exploited."¹⁹³ According to Merryman, this is a positive result of capitalism, protecting cultural objects by putting them into the hands of the highest bidder, assuming that those who are willing to pay substantial amounts of money for an object will likely preserve and care for it. This, however, is prevented by the UNESCO Convention and many source countries' exportation laws, which Merryman believes "impede or directly oppose the market and thus endanger cultural property."¹⁹⁴ Yet by implementing free trade of cultural property and commoditizing cultural objects, cultural heritage begins to lose its significance. Instead of viewing cultural objects as part of cultural identity, they are seen as possessions whose value is described in monetary terms, not in terms of heritage and identity.

Just as capitalism turns cultural heritage property into a commodity, the West turns it into art. Cultural property is seen as not only important to identity, but also as objects which enrich life by the West.¹⁹⁵ Cultural heritage objects are taken out of their context and made into objects of art. Deprived of their context, cultural heritage objects are displayed in a Western framework, "forced to conform to Western conceptions of artistic production and consumption, with all the

¹⁹² Baram, 14.

¹⁹³ Merryman, *Thinking*, 111.

¹⁹⁴ Merryman, *Thinking*, 87.

¹⁹⁵ Merryman, *Thinking*, 110.

ideological and political baggage that such conceptions entail.”¹⁹⁶ World cultural heritage is worried about the distribution of cultural objects so that everyone can learn from and associate with this heritage, but if these objects are only displayed based on Western ideology, deprived of their context and thus their true meaning, does distribution really matter? If the information and lessons learned from viewing these objects is in the wrong context and is only being used to support Western beliefs, than does world cultural heritage really foster tolerance?

Thus, all forms of cultural heritage have their positives and negatives; all are important, working both together with and against each other, especially the national and world views, as “the local and the global are in a constant state of tension with the state over heritage.”¹⁹⁷ This tension is perhaps no more apparent than in the debate over the Elgin Marbles.

¹⁹⁶ Neil Brodie, “Introduction,” in *Archaeology, Cultural Heritage, and the Antiquities Trade*, ed. Neil Brodie, Morag Kersel, Christina Luke, and Kathryn Walker Tubb (Gainesville and Tallahassee: University Press of Florida, 2006), 1.

¹⁹⁷ Harrison, 266.

Chapter 4: The Greek Cultural Heritage Argument

A. Greek Independence

As the debate over the Elgin Marbles evolved, Greece switched from emphasizing the legality of the Elgin Marbles' removal to their significance as national cultural heritage objects. Viewing cultural heritage from a national standpoint, Greece argues that the Elgin Marbles, and the Parthenon altogether, "have become one of the most celebrated and valuable parts of the symbolic capital of antiquities."¹⁹⁸ This importance grew out of the newfound connection to Classical Greece during Greek Independence. In creating a new postcolonial nation-state, Greece latched onto its ancient heroic past, using it as a foundation for pride, unity, and a continuous national narrative.

This national identification with Ancient Greece invested antiquities with greater symbolic prominence as they became "the material signifiers of continuity between classical Greece and the new nation."¹⁹⁹ Ancient cultural heritage objects and sites, in the new nation, became essential in defining the nation, making the restitution of certain cultural heritage objects necessary for the wholeness of the nation. Antiquity and its associated cultural objects are the foundation of Modern Greek national identity. As Hamilakis states, ancient national cultural heritage and its objects serve:

as symbolic and cultural capital, as a defensive symbolic weapon, as a conduit through which to understand and deal with globalized capitalist modernity. This has been a site of national unity (and discord), a measure of aesthetic achievement in the present, a sacred entity under threat, a repository of ideas, themes, and signifiers than can promote, engender, justify, and legitimize policies and procedures, views and tactics, financial transactions and moves, and more importantly, daily routines, tastes, and preferences, from eating and drinking to admiring art; and all the time constantly under the gaze of the whole western world, which had constructed its own version of the classical heritage, had

¹⁹⁸ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 274.

¹⁹⁹ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 78.

appropriated it as its own origin myth, and always felt unsure and ambivalent in dealing with the present-day inhabitants of the ‘glorious land that was Greece.’²⁰⁰

Hamilakis details how cultural heritage objects influence a nation, symbolizing national identity and uniting the citizens. Of all Greek antiquities, however, the Parthenon is perhaps one of the most symbolic cultural objects in defining the imagined community of the new Hellenic nation, justifying restitution, though ignoring important criticisms of too nationalistic an approach to cultural heritage.

This new national narrative and identity based on Ancient Greece began as Greece sought independence from the Ottoman Empire. With independence secured in 1838, even though a monarchy was installed by the Great Powers (Great Britain, Russia, France),²⁰¹ classical antiquity quickly became the foundation for the new Greek national identity in the national imagination. Even before formal independence was declared, the Greeks began to cement the bond between themselves and their past by transferring the capital from Nafplio to Athens in 1834.²⁰² Through glorifying classical antiquity, the new nation was able to set itself up as the successor to that glory, inventing a new national narrative which bridged the gap between classical and modern Greece.

B. The New National Narrative

As is common in postcolonial nations, Greece divorced its national narrative from its colonized and conquered past, “and placed it in a de-historicized myth-space. The Greek War of Independence was portrayed as unique, since it was seen as a continuation of the eternal struggle

²⁰⁰ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 7-8.

²⁰¹ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 83.

²⁰² Hamilakis, *Nation*, 83.

of the Hellenic nation against its oriental others.”²⁰³ Greece crafted a continuous national narrative which emphasized their past and ancestry, erasing the disillusion of colonization and providing wholeness to the new nation by portraying the nation as unbroken from past to present. This is accomplished by the crafting of a national narrative that focuses on the continuous defeat of the eastern barbarian by the Greeks, spanning from the Persian Wars to the Greek War of Independence. By overcoming, essentially ignoring, their colonial past in their new national narrative, Greece counters the negative effects and oppression of the Turks, who disposed of their cultural property, showing contempt for Greek culture, thus demoralizing, marginalizing, and making the Greeks inferior. The destruction and removal of cultural property is a form of cultural terrorism and psychological warfare. This new, continuous national narrative helps emancipate Greece from its colonial past and the damaging psychological effects it had.

This national narrative and identity, which overcomes previous colonization, is then represented and supported in material form through cultural heritage objects, displaying these objects in Greek museums, thus materializing the nation’s continuity and turning the national myth into truth through concrete evidence in national museums.²⁰⁴ In this way, modern Greece incorporates the achievements and events of past people into their narrative and identity, rather than breaking with the past, finding both continuity and pride through their connection to the past, shedding colonial bonds.

This new continuous national narrative is manifested in material form through the Parthenon. Not only is the Parthenon a monument from Classical Greece, which is the foundation of the national narrative, but it symbolizes Greek dominance over the ‘other’. Modern Greece formulated a continuous national narrative based on bridging the gap between the

²⁰³ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 103.

²⁰⁴ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 47.

Ancient Greek victory over the Persians and Modern Greek Independence from the Ottomans. The Periklean Athenians had used mythological scenes to represent the defeat of the Persians with the Amazonomachy, Centauromachy, Gigantomachy, and Trojan War. These symbols are being utilized once more by the Greeks, extending their meaning to encompass not just the Persian Wars but also the Greek War of Independence. The symbolism of the Parthenon, both ancient and modern, authenticates the national narrative, giving it tangibility in the form of a cultural object. The continuity of the nation and its history is represented in the Parthenon, which represents the continuous defeat of the eastern 'other' by the Greeks. This continuous national narrative emancipates the Greeks from their colonial history, freeing them from the oppression of cultural terrorism. Thus, to further make amends for past tyranny and psychological damage, it is of the utmost importance for the Elgin Marbles to be returned, as they represent this new Greek national narrative and restitution would be a salve to the wounds of colonization.

The ancient past did not just allow for a continuous national narrative, however, but it also infused modern Greeks with a sense of pride in their nation through the heroic deeds of their ancestors. The new nation can be proud of both their defeat of the Ottoman Empire and of the ancient Greek victory over the Persians. The continuity in this imagined history of defeat of the eastern 'other' grants modern Greeks access to the prestige of the past, linking them to their ancient ancestors, who also battled and conquered the oriental barbarians. In addition to feeling national pride through ancient wars, modern Greeks, by using Ancient Greece as a reference point for their national narrative, also feel national pride through the perceived superiority of Classical Greek culture. Classical Athens was considered to be at the height of culture, surpassing in arts, philosophy, and politics. This ancient culture serves as a source of pride for modern Greece, as well as a lesson and standard to live up to.

No other cultural object perhaps inspires this kind of national pride as the Parthenon does. The Parthenon is a symbol par excellence of art, serving as a model for fine art to generations to come. Yet, the Parthenon goes beyond its aesthetic beauty in representing the culture of fifth century BC Athens. The symbolism of the Parthenon represents ancient Athenian belief in the supremacy of their own culture, emphasizing their democracy and the defeat of the oriental barbarian by the civilized Greek. The metopes, continuous frieze, and statue of Athena Parthenos all, or most depending on the interpretation of the frieze, use mythical battles against the 'other' to represent Greek victory over the Persians, showing the defeat of the uncouth barbarian by the cultured Greek/Athenian. Periklean Athenian culture was what set Athens apart from both oriental barbarians and other Greeks.

As Perikles proudly claims in his Funeral Orations, Athens valued art and politics equally to war. This was a prominent characteristic of classical Athenian identity and nationalism. Periklean Athens defined itself by its superiority in culture and in war, as evident in Perikles' Funeral Oration. This definition has been appropriated by modern Greeks, adapting the past so that regional Athenian history became national history in order that they create a continuous national narrative in which the citizens can find pride in their past "and of the contribution that they and their forefathers have made to the civilization,"²⁰⁵ by both having defeated eastern invaders.

This pride and the continuous national narrative unite the Greeks as one nation, giving them a wholeness which was denied to them under colonization. Modern Greeks share, through this national narrative, a common ancestry, a common heroic past, a common sense of pride in the past. It links them together, defining who they are and producing both their national cultural

²⁰⁵ Browning, 13.

identity as well as their national identity in general. As with many other nations, especially postcolonial nations, the creation of the new Greek nation reveals an anxiety for the whole, “*the nostalgia for the whole.*”²⁰⁶ A nation is fragmented after colonization, especially if it was not a nation beforehand. The broken sherds of the nation must be pieced together, not only restoring but also recreating the nation as a single entity, which did not previously exist. Greece had to construct a sovereign nation out of the fragmented bits of the past.

This refers to both the citizens and cultural property. Uniting the citizens through a shared national narrative and pride in the past fosters wholeness but the national narrative and pride which enable this wholeness are made concrete through cultural heritage objects, enforcing, celebrating, and reminding the citizens of their imagined community. To be fully whole, the possession and display of national cultural heritage objects are essential. Thus, restitution for a nation is not merely about the ownership of antiquity, but is part of “*the nostalgia for the whole.*”²⁰⁷ A nation needs its cultural objects to authenticate and materialize its national narrative, standing as a source of pride and inspiration for a nation. This is why the return of the Elgin Marbles is so desired by the Greeks, who need the Parthenon to stand whole both for the sake of wholeness in general but also as one of the most symbolic representations of the new nation.

C. Colonization Continues

Thus, Greece fashioned a new national narrative for itself during the Greek War of Independence, focusing on antiquity and breaking away from the closer colonial past. The colonial past can be ignored, however, it cannot be eliminated; its influence still exists. The use

²⁰⁶ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 282.

²⁰⁷ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 284.

of antiquity as a foundation for the new national narrative, while divorcing colonization and emphasizing an idealized heroic antiquity, was a byproduct of colonization. The nineteenth century, in which the Elgin Marbles were removed, glorified Hellenic classical antiquity, particularly in Europe. The prioritization of Classical Greece over the rest of Greece's history had begun in Europe long before Greece began imagining its new national identity, as far back as the Italian Renaissance, so that "The establishment of classical antiquity as the symbolic capital for the new nation was therefore a result of the adoption of a western ideal, that of Hellenism."²⁰⁸ The Hellenism that Greece founded their new national narrative on is in reality a western Hellenism, which only champions the characteristics of Ancient Greece that resonate with the west, like art, politics, and philosophy—the superiority of the ancient culture.

The influence of past colonialism is not only apparent in the revival of Hellenism, but also in the control of information. Control of information refers to the excavation and research conducted and publications written about antiquity and archaeological remains. Modern Greece is dependent upon foreign schools for archaeological knowledge. Much of the excavation done in Greece is done by foreign archaeologists, mainly westerners. Thus most of the studies conducted and information published are in the languages of these foreign schools. This requires the Greek archaeologists to learn these languages to study their own history, which can lead to them having to receive education at foreign (western) institutions.²⁰⁹ These publications and foreign institutions teach Greek history from their perspectives, putting western philosophies and ideologies into their research, influencing the past and performing a soft power form of colonization through controlling cultural information. Thus, despite postcolonial attempts to

²⁰⁸ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 76-77.

²⁰⁹ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 49.

move past and ignore colonial history, the influence of colonialism, both past and present, is alive and prominent in Greek national cultural heritage and national identity.

European influence on Greece is particularly evident in the years following Greek independence, especially as the Great Powers (Great Britain, France, and Russia) installed a monarchy soon after Greece won its independence. The national narrative is in a state of constant flux, adapting to changes in the nation and continuously being reconstructed. The construction of the new Greek national narrative was not a fixed entity after Independence. Though Greece initially intended on having a democratic form of government leading the new nation, a monarchy was installed by the Great Powers.²¹⁰ This led to a succession of monarchs and dictators until 1967, when a military junta was installed with the aid of the United States.²¹¹ A counter-coup in 1973 established a new dictator after the brutal Polytechnic school uprising in Athens in November of 1973, but the new regime did not last long, collapsing in 1974 when Turkey invaded Cyprus.²¹² Elections were then held on the anniversary of the Polytechnic uprising, leading to the creation of a democratic and republican constitution in June 1975, which voted not to restore the monarchy.²¹³

Under the monarchs and dictators, the Greek national narrative remained grounded in Hellenism, though the narrative was reconstructed and adapted with time. Metaxas, a Greek dictator in the 1930s, used Hellenism and the national narrative to ‘purify’ the homeland, attempting to awaken a cultural and spiritual renaissance. He formulated the national narrative to divide into three Hellenic civilizations: classical Greece, the Byzantine Empire, and his regime

²¹⁰ Nicholas Doumanis, *A History of Greece* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 175.

²¹¹ Doumanis, 210.

²¹² Doumanis, 211-214.

²¹³ Doumanis, 213.

which would create the Third Hellenic Civilization. The Third Hellenic Civilization was supposed to be a utopian society that combined the best parts of the two previous civilizations.²¹⁴

D. The Rise of Democracy in the National Narrative

With the fall of the dictators and the military junta, the Third Hellenic Civilization was lost. The installation of a Parliamentary Republic led to a new emphasis on democracy as part of the national identity and the national narrative.²¹⁵ Colonial history, including all the invasions Athens and Greece suffered since antiquity, not just the oppression withstood under the Ottoman Empire, was erased from the national imagination. There was no longer discussion about the Second Hellenic Civilization of the Byzantine Empire. Classical Greece was the primary focus of the national narrative, specifically Athenian fifth century democracy. Modern Greece paralleled their ancestors once again; not only did they both defeat the oriental ‘other,’ but now they were both supporters of democratic governments. This serves as another source of pride, unity, and continuity for modern Greece.

Through emphasizing their democracy, modern Greece is able to further craft their continuous narrative by upholding that they have been the supporters and protectors of democracy since their ancestors, who were the first to have a democratic government. The continuous national narrative of democracy then further generates pride and unity among the citizens. Modern Greece, which previously celebrated their superiority of culture and their defeat of the eastern ‘other’, now can include being the founders of democracy by their connection to their ancestors and by their current democratic government, taking pride in the superiority of their politics and their contribution to humanity. This pride then fosters greater unity, bringing

²¹⁴ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 175.

²¹⁵ Hitchens, “Elgin,” 81.

the citizens together through their shared ancestry of democracy and pride in their nation's continuity.

The Parthenon is a symbol of this democracy. It represented democracy and a continuous national narrative of democracy for the fifth century BCE Athenians and it is now being reused to once again symbolize this national defining characteristic. The Parthenon frieze aids Modern Greece in bridging the gap between Athenian democracy and their democracy, for, depending on the interpretation, it can represent democracy and the continuous history of democracy in Athens. The frieze could possibly be depicting the Great Panathenaia Festival,²¹⁶ representing democracy through a festival which included all of Athens: citizens, women, children, metics (resident foreigners), and slaves. During the Panathenaia, all residents were in a sense equal, or at the least were included and had a role to play, which gave a democratic air to the festival. If interpreted as Connelly would have it, with the frieze depicting the sacrifice of Erectheus's daughter for the greater good of the city, then as far back as the mythical past, Athens is represented as possessing democratic values through the prioritization of the city over the individual.²¹⁷ This interpretation creates an idealized continuous national narrative of democracy, reconstructing the past as more democratic and less tyrannical, uniting both Athens' mythical past and classical past.

The reemphasis on democracy in the Modern Greek national narrative builds upon this united past and the previous symbolism of the Parthenon. Greece is merely picking up where Classical Athens left off. Athenian democracy is theirs by inheritance and the Greeks have reconstructed their national narrative to transition from democracy to democracy, giving continuity to their history and pride to themselves. The Parthenon sculptures continue to

²¹⁶ Hurwit, 186.

²¹⁷ Connelly, 53.

represent a democracy unbroken by time, beginning in the mythical past. The same characteristics, found in the Parthenon Marbles and Perikles' Funeral Oration that defined Periklean Athenian identity, exist today to define Modern Greek national identity: democracy, cultural supremacy, the defeat of the oriental 'other'. As Manolis Andronikos states, the Parthenon needs to be made whole, for it is essential to defining and materializing Modern Greek national identity as it “expresses the quintessence of the Greek spirit and embodies the ultimate groundwork of Athenian democracy. This monument survives almost entire in its place on the rock of the Acropolis, which constitutes for Greece the symbol of her centuries-old history.”²¹⁸

E. Greek Cultural Heritage in an Age of Capitalism and Globalization

Yet the story of creation and recreation of the Greek national narrative does not end there. A lot of change has occurred in the last few decades since Greece became a Parliamentary Republic, particularly on an international and global level. The rise of capitalism and globalization has had a major impact on nations and their cultures, adjusting their national narratives and national identities. Instead of facing colonization or tyrants, Greek nationalism is in conflict with and is being shaped by interactions with the global world. Some of this influence has had positive effects on Greek nationalism, boosting their self-confidence in their belief of the supremacy of their culture. Worldwide Greece is thought to be “a superpower in the field of culture.”²¹⁹ This has been the case as far back as the thirteenth century CE with the Italian Renaissance, when Greek architecture, art, philosophy, and culture influenced the art and culture of the time. Greek art continued to influence culture into the nineteenth century, when Elgin removed the Elgin Marbles from the Parthenon, ‘saving’ them for future generations to

²¹⁸ Walden, 55.

²¹⁹ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 52.

appreciate as examples of the finest art. Ancient Greece has been applauded and imitated by western societies in terms of democracy and political philosophy. Thus, Ancient Greece was a part of European modernity even before Greek Independence and it continues to be today.

By reclaiming their ancient history, Greece is participating in European modernity, prioritizing and idealizing Classical Greece. The Modern Greeks, however, are not merely jumping on the bandwagon, but are attempting to participate “from a position of superiority, based on the perception that the people of modern Greece were direct descendants and rightful owners of classical Europe.”²²⁰ Through this participation in European modernity, modern Greece is reclaiming its history, creating a sense of pride in the superiority of their culture, and attempting to rule as a sovereign nation which can control its own history. Just as in Periklean Athens, Greece is trying to define itself by its perceived view of the supremacy of Greek culture, setting themselves up as not just the “school of Greece,”²²¹ but also of the world. The symbolism of the Parthenon and Periklean rhetoric from the Funeral Oration are again in play as Modern Greece tries to find its place in a global world, showing the symbolic importance the Parthenon holds for Modern Greece is authenticating and materializing Greece’s national narrative and identity.

The effects of capitalism and globalization have also had negative effects on the formation and re-crafting of the Modern Greek national narrative. Ancient Greece has previously been described as a source of pride for its modern citizens, yet it can also be a burden, a reminder of greatness gone and never to be achieved again. Or at least that is how the Eurocentric west makes it seem. Though Greece is attempting to participate in European modernity, Greece is denied its legacy by Western cultures, which have themselves taken up Classical Greece as their

²²⁰ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 77.

²²¹ Thucydides, 2.41.1.

legacy.²²² Greece is criticized by the west for not living up to the greatness of their past; a past which the west itself uses as a measure for success and culture.²²³ This criticism has led some Greeks to believe that their past is a hindrance to them and to their prosperity because the west only looks upon them as culture that was at its zenith thousands of years ago. This oppression from the west through the appropriation of ancient Greece is a form of soft power colonization, forcing a Eurocentric, globalized ideology on the Greeks, effecting their national narrative and identity. Only through Greek control of their past can this oppression be overcome, which requires a wholeness of the nation, including the repatriation of essential cultural heritage objects, like the Elgin Marbles.

F. Continuity and National Identity as Told in Textbooks

All this change and development of the national narrative and of national identity is clearly visible in Greek elementary history text books, further highlighting the need for the repatriation of the Elgin Marbles for national identity. It is nowhere more evident than in these text books, which mold the minds of the citizens, how important the national narrative and cultural objects are to the formation of a nation. Elementary Greek history books emphasize Greece's continuity, pride, sovereignty, and unity through an idealized national narrative based on antiquity, breaking colonial bonds in the process while still conforming to western Hellenism. Textbooks, like cultural archaeological objects, play an authoritative role, authenticating the national narrative as an official version of history.²²⁴ Thus, they help construct and spread the

²²² Maria Koundoura, *The Greek Idea: The Formation of National and Transnational Identities* (London and New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007), 4.

²²³ Koundoura, 6.

²²⁴ Yannis Hamilakis, "'Learn History!' Antiquity, National Narrative, and History in Greek Educational Textbooks," in *The Usable Past: Greek Metahistories*, ed. K.S. Brown and Yannis Hamilakis (New York and Oxford: Lexington Books, 2003), 41.

national narrative, thereby giving national identity to the citizens, serving as another kind of cultural property.

The national narrative which Greek history textbooks teach is one based in classical antiquity. A 3rd grade history textbook, which was supposed to be about the prehistoric past, focuses mainly on Hellenism. Intertwined with this Hellenocentric history are references to contemporary times, linking the past and present together to show continuity.²²⁵ Another textbook, for a slightly older grade, called *The Cultural Contribution of Hellenism* in 1997 attempted to further this continuity by crafting a coherent narrative of the transitions between the Mycenaean period, Hellenism, and the Byzantine period, though the emphasis is once again on Hellenism, unifying the time periods together.²²⁶ This textbook tries to piece the fragments of the national narrative together by sidestepping and ignoring certain undesirable aspects of history.

In part, the textbooks are attempting to eliminate the threat of a thesis written by Fallmerayer, which claimed that Modern Greeks were not the descendants of Ancient Greeks and therefore have no claim to their past and culture. Thus, Greece set about proving their authenticity by narrating a Hellenic heritage “with the restitution of Byzantium as part of the Hellenic heritage and as bridging gap between antiquity and modern Hellenism.”²²⁷ Altogether, the Greek history textbooks narrate a continuous, unifying history from the Mycenaean era to the present, focusing on Hellenism,²²⁸ showing how significant the national narrative and its material property are to creating and supporting national identity.

²²⁵ Hamilakis, “Learn,” 49.

²²⁶ Hamilakis, “Learn,” 53.

²²⁷ Hamilakis, “Learn,” 57.

²²⁸ Hamilakis, “Learn,” 55.

Altogether, Greece has formulated a national narrative with a foundation in Classical Greece, defining Modern Greek identity based on the characteristics of democracy, cultural supremacy, and the defeat of the oriental 'other'. These characteristics are the same as those which are represented on the Parthenon Marbles and expressed in Perikles' Funeral Oration, creating continuity by bridging the gap between Classical Athens and Modern Greece. The idealized national narrative and national identity this creates is made concrete through the Parthenon, which serves now as it did in fifth century BCE Athens as a symbol of what it means to be an Athenian/Greek, uniting the nation through a continuous national narrative which fosters pride and patriotism. It is this symbolic significance of the Parthenon that makes restitution so essential to Greek nationalism.

F. Ignored Realities

Yet this nationalistic stance on cultural property is based on an idealized national narrative. The realities of the nation must be remembered. Retention and repatriation of cultural objects lose all significance if preservation is not secure. Though Greece has constructed a state of the art museum to house the Elgin Marbles upon their hoped for return, the country is currently in its fifth year of recession, relying upon bailouts from the EU. This recession and debt has led to internal conflict, with rioting in the streets, building being set on fire, tear gas being used on civilians, and politicians being mobbed. Greeks resist paying their taxes and the economy keeps further tanking, requiring multiple bailouts which have not solved the situation. Greece is currently being offered the largest bailout in history from the International Monetary Fund (\$37 billion),²²⁹ yet it might be too much too late. The Greek government is at odds on how

²²⁹ Stephen Castle, "With Details Settled, a 2nd Greek Bailout is Formally Approved," *New York Times*, 15 March 2012, B3.

to apply this money and stimulate the economy. With civil unrest and a tanked economy, is Greece capable of preserving the Elgin Marbles, even with the New Acropolis Museum? Care and upkeep of antiquities is not cheap and they require a stable environment as well.

In addition to the potential threat to preservation, the Athenians may have ulterior motives for requesting the return of the Elgin Marbles. In participating in European modernity, Greece has entered the global and capitalist sphere, where cultural heritage objects are commoditized, giving them a price tag and lessening their importance as cultural objects in favor of consumption. The Elgin Marbles have been described as the symbolic capital of Greece, and like all capital, they can be exchanged for monetary and national profit.²³⁰ The Marbles switch from being symbolic capital, symbolizing Greek nationalism and pride, to being economic capital when they are put on the market, traded, or housed in museums. Once in the New Acropolis Museum, the Greeks can charge a fee for visitors to view the Elgin Marbles, generating income for the impoverished nation. The Elgin Marbles would also become part of Greece's tourist industry,²³¹ possibly attracting more tourists and providing even more monetary benefits to Greece. Thus, the question must be asked, "Is Greece requesting the Marbles under the guise of nationalism, when perhaps their immediate motives are of an economic nature?"²³²

It is clear how the Parthenon is an essential component to the composition of Greece's national narrative and to the construction of national identity. The Parthenon, in its completeness, materializes the idealized continuous national narrative which the Greeks have composed since their independence. The national connection to its Classical past, to Athenian democracy, to Greek victories over oriental 'others,' and to a superiority of culture, all of which are important

²³⁰ Kersel, 49.

²³¹ Kersel, 50-51.

²³² Kersel, 49.

characteristics of Greek national identity and create continuity, are present in the symbolism of the Parthenon Marbles. Yet it is also important to be aware of the realities of the nation and possible ulterior motives existing under this nationalistic ideology, leaving the door open to other possible interpretations of cultural heritage and other potential claims to the right of ownership of the Elgin Marbles.

Chapter 5: The British Argument: Combining National and World Views

Unlike the Greeks, Great Britain is using both national and world cultural heritage arguments, combining the two to justify the Elgin Marbles' residency in the British Museum. The Elgin Marbles have been in England since 1812. In the two centuries that the Elgin Marbles have resided in England, they have become part of British cultural heritage, influencing British national culture and national identity. In addition to being part of the British nation, the Elgin Marbles also hold global significance, being a piece of the culture heritage of mankind. The ideology behind world heritage comes from the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict from May 14, 1954, which states that cultural property is "the cultural heritage of all mankind."²³³ By utilizing both kinds of heritage, the British are attempting to counter the Greek nationalistic claim to the Elgin Marbles, while including a new component to the argument, that of world heritage.

A. The Elgin Marbles as Part of British Cultural Heritage

If the Elgin Marbles are fragments of Greek national culture and identity, then so too are they for British national culture and identity. The Elgin Marbles have been in England for two centuries now, influencing British art, culture, and nationalism. They are now part of British cultural heritage as well, helping to "define the British to themselves, inspire British arts, give Britons identity and community, civilize and enrich British life, stimulate British scholarship."²³⁴ The reason the Elgin Marbles are able to do this for the British is because the British view themselves as the true descendants of Classical Greek culture. Western Hellenism of the nineteenth century, when the Elgin Marbles were removed, viewed Ancient Greek culture,

²³³ Merryman, *Thinking*, 56.

²³⁴ Merryman, "Law," 75.

specifically Periklean Athenian culture, as the most refined, civilized, artistic, learned, philosophical, and reasonable culture, which is how contemporary Britain viewed itself.

As we have seen in the symbolism of the Parthenon, the fifth century BC Athenians believed that of themselves as well. The representations of Periklean Athenian cultural supremacy are evident in the Elgin Marbles, showing the defeat of the barbarous, eastern ‘other’ by a western, civilized society. The Elgin Marbles symbolize what it meant to be Athenian in fifth century BCE Athens: civilized, cultured, artistic, democratic, and victorious over the ‘other’. The British have merely appropriated this symbolism, adapting it to fit their needs. By possessing the Elgin Marbles, the British are able to identify with the prestige and power of ancient Greek culture.

This, however, has nothing to do with the British racially identifying with the Greeks or empowering contemporary Greece, instead in England ““there was a sense that the British, as the greatest, freest, people on Earth, were the most natural possessors of the objects.””²³⁵ The nineteenth century British racist, Robert Knox, believed that the classical race of ancient Greece could no longer be found in Greece, but rather in London.²³⁶ To justify and support this belief of cultural, and even racial, supremacy, the British need to have concrete proof, materializing this reconstruction of their national narrative and national identity. The Elgin Marbles are not only evidence of Classical Athenian ancestry for the British, but they show that the British are worthy descendants of Classical Greek culture by their rescuing of the Marbles from Turkish negligence and destruction.²³⁷ Thus, the British have edited their national narrative to include Classical Athenian culture, crafting a continuous history of cultural supremacy stemming from Classical

²³⁵ Kersel, 45.

²³⁶ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 253.

²³⁷ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 253.

Athens, generating pride in the citizens over a heroic, continuous past. The fifth century BC symbolism of the Elgin Marbles has been adopted and adapted by the British, so that the Elgin Marbles represent and materialize British identity and the British national narrative.

One way in which the British can see themselves in the Elgin Marbles is through their artistic achievements. The Amazonomachy, Centauromachy, Gigantomachy, and Trojan War depictions on the Elgin Marbles all symbolize the defeat of the uncultured barbarian by the civilized Greeks. Part of this supreme culture is ancient Athenian excellence in art, represented by the Parthenon as a whole. The Parthenon was an aesthetic and mathematical work of wonder. The high and low relief carvings taken together with the mathematical adjustments of entasis make the Parthenon an example of elite art. The Elgin Marbles represent a supremacy in art, which was initially a characteristic of Periclean Athens, but has now been appropriated by the British to represent their national identity, which includes their belief in the surpassing excellence of their culture and art.

The Elgin Marbles do not only symbolize for the British their existing excellence in the fields of art and culture, but they have influenced British art and culture as well, shaping society, thus remolding national culture and therefore national identity. Once in England, the Elgin Marbles became part of the British imagined community, especially in the sphere of art. The acquisition of the Elgin Marbles by England coincided with romantic ideals and the ‘Greek Revival’ in art and architecture, further inspiring this movement. The realism and detail of the sculptures reshaped art and aesthetic taste, moving away from abstract Roman art.²³⁸ The Elgin Marbles have become a source of national pride for Great Britain, representing their cultural and artistic supremacy and at the same time enriching their arts and culture, “for more than two

²³⁸ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 252.

hundred years, inspiring generations of writers, poets, artists, architects, and scholars,”²³⁹ further shaping British national culture and therefore British identity.

In the field of painting, Grecian themes were frequently depicted, especially in the paintings of G.F. Watts, Fredrick Leighton, West, and Haydon, who excelled as late Victorian high artists.²⁴⁰ West and Haydon did not only include Classical Greek motifs in their art, but went as far as to claim that some of their paintings were inspired by studying the Elgin Marbles. According to them, the study of the Elgin Marbles enabled them to found a new school of historical painting.²⁴¹ Besides painting, the Elgin Marbles’ influence on culture was especially prominent in architecture. For almost a generation after the Elgin Marbles arrived in London, public buildings were constructed in the classical style, referencing the Parthenon in Britain.²⁴² Though the Grecian style had already been popular in Britain before the Elgin Marbles reached London, their arrival reenergized the popularity of the style and contemporary buildings resembled the Parthenon, the Erectheion, and the Propylaea.²⁴³

As discussed in chapter three, an individual’s local environment, including the buildings they see and pass every day, play a key role in their memories and sense of self, affecting their personal identity. This also influences their cultural identity, as the art surrounding a person dictates the kind of cultural object which they can relate to. By growing up and being surrounded by buildings which resemble the Parthenon and Greek antiquity, the British population can easily connect to and feel a cultural bond to the Elgin Marbles, seeing them as being from a culture similar to theirs and being a part of their national culture and identity.

²³⁹ Sultans, 104.

²⁴⁰ St Clair, *Lord*, 272 and 276.

²⁴¹ St Clair, *Lord*, 272.

²⁴² St Clair, *Lord*, 275.

²⁴³ St Clair, *Lord*, 273.

The British further see themselves in the symbolism of the Elgin Marbles by having assumed Periklean rhetoric from his Funeral Oration, where he praises Athens for cultivating the arts while still retaining fighting force. Perikles states that “Moreover we provided the most reliefs for the mind, making use of games and festivals year round, and of elegant private establishments, which the daily enjoyment of drives away distress,”²⁴⁴ showing that the Periklean Athenians took pride in and identified themselves based on their artistic achievements and the beautification of the city. Fifth century BCE Athens surpassed all in terms of culture, including the arts, at least according to themselves. This belief has now passed into the hands of the British, assuming a Periklean mindset and thus being able to connect to the symbolism of the Elgin Marbles. The Elgin Marbles have influenced and excelled British art, as well as have been adapted to represent these newfound artistic achievements, with the British adopting and re-crafting the symbolism of the Parthenon and Periklean rhetoric from the Funeral Oration.

The British do not only connect to the Elgin Marbles artistically, but also through the commonality of imperialism shared by the Periklean Athenians and the 19th century British. At the time of the construction of the Parthenon, Athens was also building its empire, forcing ‘allies’ from the Delian League into tribute-supplying vassal states. In addition to this, the Athenians had just helped defeat the Persians and were facing hostilities from neighboring Greek states, namely Sparta. Athens’ imperialism was evident in their consumption of weaker states into their empire and their rivalry with equivalent states. This imperialism is symbolized in the Elgin Marbles as one of the defining characteristics of fifth century BCE Athenian identity. The defeats of the oriental and mythical barbarians in the Parthenon metopes do not only represent Athenian supremacy of culture, but also the general Greek victory over the ‘other’. The

²⁴⁴ Thucydides, 2.38.1.

depictions on the Elgin Marbles flaunt Greek and Athenian victory over the Persians, while warning and threatening the east and other Greek states from invading or going up against Athens.

The British in the 19th century were in a similar situation to the fifth century BCE Athenians. They were trying to maintain their empire while competing with fellow empires, especially France. When Lord Elgin was retaining his firmans to gain access to the Marbles, the French were also attempting to achieve a foothold in the Ottoman Empire, seeking to acquire Greek antiquities for their own museums.²⁴⁵ The superpowers of the time were competing in a museum war,²⁴⁶ representing their empires and their superiority over other empires.

The acquisition of the Elgin Marbles held special significance to the British Empire however. They were not only part of this museum war to show empire superiority, but they also were seen as representing English victory over the French at the battle of Waterloo in 1815. Waterloo became as second Salamis or Marathon for the British, seeing their defeat of the ‘other’ as a parallel to the Athenian victories in the Persian Wars.²⁴⁷ By connecting to Athens in the Persian Wars, the British adapt their continuous national narrative to formulate a continuous history of British victorious-ness over the weaker ‘other’, proving themselves to be the ancestors of the Classical Athenians in terms of superior culture and power. The British see themselves in the Periklean Athenian symbolism of the Elgin Marbles, altering the symbolism of the Elgin Marbles to represent their imperial power, showing their political, military, and cultural supremacy over their colonies and the French,²⁴⁸ which were central characteristic for defining 19th century British national identity.

²⁴⁵ Merryman, *Thinking*, 45.

²⁴⁶ Sultans, 102.

²⁴⁷ St Clair, *Lord*, 261. Jenkins, 16.

²⁴⁸ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 256.

Also occurring during the time of Elgin's removal of the Marbles was the aftermath of the French Revolution. For radicals who supported the drive for political freedom, Greek democracy became the ancestor of their contemporary movement and the Greek art that went along with the Athenian democracy was seen as tangible representations for this call for freedom.²⁴⁹ It was amidst this politically charged atmosphere that the Elgin Marbles arrived in London in 1807. The Elgin Marbles were imbued with new meaning by those debating the issue of democracy and the value of art in society, who saw the Elgin Marbles as symbols of democracy,²⁵⁰ which was an easy connection to make as the Elgin Marbles had already once represented democracy for the Classical Athenians. As described in previous chapters, the Parthenon sculptures, namely the frieze, honor Athenian democracy either through the Panathenaia, where all Athenians were involved, or through the creation of a continuous narrative of democracy by the sacrifice of King Erechtheus' daughter for the greater good of the city.

The 19th century British simply adapted this previous symbolism to fit their contemporary lives. Though Great Britain did not have a democratic government at the time of the Elgin Marble's removal from Greece, over time this emphasis on democracy grew as Great Britain switched to a democratic Parliamentary government. With the new democratic government the Elgin Marbles' symbolism of democracy became more pertinent to British society and the Elgin Marbles further represented British national identity, symbolizing their culture not just in terms of art and imperialism, but also in democracy too. The characteristics that once defined what it meant to be a fifth century BC Athenian, which are represented in the Elgin Marbles and on the Parthenon, are now the defining characteristics of British society.

²⁴⁹ Jenkins, 15.

²⁵⁰ Jenkins, 15.

Thus, nineteenth century Britain spewed the rhetoric of Perikles' Funeral Oration, connecting their national narrative and cultural heritage back to the Classical Athenians. This was due in part to the effect of the Elgin Marbles being in London, influencing English art and culture. Yet it also affected the Elgin Marbles, turning them into a British national cultural heritage object by adopting and adapting their ancient symbolism to British needs. Just as Perikles claimed culture superiority for his Athenians, the British believe themselves to be "the most commercial, most international, and most individualistic society that had yet existed,"²⁵¹ recalling Perikles' speech. In this way the British view themselves as the true cultural ancestors of the Classical Athenians. The British use the Elgin Marbles, as fifth century BCE Athens used the Parthenon, to proclaim and materialize their excellence and national identity.

The British further use Periklean rhetoric by acknowledging their debt to their ancient teacher, Athens,²⁵² which is similar to Perikles' statement that fifth century BCE Athens is indebted to their ancestors for the prestige of Classical Athens which came from their inherited democracy and power.²⁵³ The British also parallel Perikles in believing that they are educating the rest of the world through their culture and control of the Elgin Marbles, though not just as a "school of Hellas,"²⁵⁴ but a school for the world. The British Museum is sharing this heritage with the rest of the world through their ownership and display of the Elgin Marbles in the British Museum. Though Great Britain states that they are sharing this heritage because it belongs to western, if not to world heritage, they are the ones controlling how it is displayed and how it is shared. Thus the British are not merely sharing this heritage with the world through their museum, but they are using it as a lesson to all as the symbol of the best and freest nation:

²⁵¹ St Clair, *Lord*, 275.

²⁵² St Clair, *Lord*, 275.

²⁵³ Thucydides, 2.36.1-2.

²⁵⁴ Thucydides, 2.41.1.

Britain. As the Parthenon Marbles originally embodied the rhetoric of Perikles' Funeral Oration, they once again take on this symbolism as the British assume Periklean beliefs and ideology, adapting both Periklean rhetoric and the Elgin Marbles to symbolize and materialize their national cultural identity.

B. British National Cultural Heritage as Colonization

The Elgin Marbles, residing in London for over two centuries, are now part of British cultural heritage and British identity, both influencing and being influenced by English society. Yet this nationalistic view has negative side effects for the Greeks, beyond the removal of the Elgin Marbles from Greece. The Elgin Marbles have always represented colonialism and imperialistic power. They originally symbolized the Athenian colonial empire, then they were acquired in a colonial arena by the British Empire from the Ottoman Empire, and in the 19th century they were adapted by the British to represent the British Empire. This empire is now gone but the symbolism remains.

By maintaining possession of the Elgin Marbles and controlling the cultural heritage of the 'other', the British are keeping a hold on their previous empire. Displaying other cultures' cultural objects in their 'world' museum allows the British to control this heritage, dictating how it is presented, the research conducted, and the information published. This enables the British to manipulate the symbolism of the cultural objects they possess, influencing and possibly suppressing Greece's heritage and how it is viewed. The British Museum arranges cultural objects to suit their needs and their ideologies, ignoring what value these objects hold to their source country. Thus Great Britain handles other cultures, manipulating them, showing them to be inferior and under the power of Great Britain. For these reasons, the Elgin Marbles do not

only represent for the English their past imperialism but also their present day colonialism efforts.

The acquisition and manipulation of other nations' cultural objects is a soft power form of colonization. The British may not be invading Greece, but they are influencing Greek national cultural heritage, therefore effecting Greek national identity by possessing, adopting, and adapting the Elgin Marbles and their symbolism. Through their belief in being the cultural ancestors of the Classical Athenians, the British are denying Greece their heritage, taking away their agency and advocating Greek inferiority. The British ignore Greek nationalist claims to the Elgin Marbles, supporting their own nationalistic view, which culturally colonizes the Greeks. The British national cultural heritage argument surrounding the Elgin Marbles, though valid, treats Greece like a second world country, culturally colonizing them and denying them sovereignty by controlling their heritage.

C. National Realities

Another criticism of the British cultural heritage argument is that the connection the average British citizen feels towards the Elgin Marbles is substantially less than this nationalistic stance leads one to believe. A majority of Englishmen are in favor of restitution with polls indicating that the British support the return of the Elgin Marbles three to one.²⁵⁵ The British view restitution as a gesture of friendship, showing goodwill and respect to a culture which has greatly influenced theirs. A telephone poll that occurred on Channel 4 in England had 91,000 respondents, 92% of which supported restitution.²⁵⁶ A poll conducted in the House of Commons found that 66 percent of the M.P.s are in favor of returning the Elgin Marbles, though only if

²⁵⁵ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 272.

²⁵⁶ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 272.

three conditions are met: Greece funds the cost of return and for a set of copies to be made for London, Greece makes no more requests for the restitution of other antiquities from the British Museum, and Greece builds a new museum in addition to a restoration project for the Acropolis.²⁵⁷ Both the average citizen and a majority of politicians support restitution. If this is so, how can Great Britain argue that the Elgin Marbles are essential to their national culture, impacting their national identity?

Despite this call for restitution, the return of the Elgin Marbles has not occurred and a compromise does not seem near. Why not return the Elgin Marbles if that is the majority's will? The British will only return the Elgin Marbles if there is some monetary incentive or political gain. James Cuno, the former director of the Harvard University Art Museums, stated that the only reason the British would support restitution would be for economic or political gain.²⁵⁸ Repatriation is not a favor or a gift which one country gives to another; it is part of a mutually beneficial exchange done out of national interest. In return for the Elgin Marbles there must be some incentive, either monetary or politically. As Greece is in a five year recession currently, then perhaps instead of money they could allow Great Britain to build air force bases in Greece for easier access to the Middle East.²⁵⁹ The Elgin Marbles are symbolic capital with this symbolism turning them into economic capital as well by capitalistic ideology. Therefore the Elgin Marbles are merely another source of capital for the British, one that can be exchanged for political or military favors.

Then is the real reason behind refusing restitution an economic one and not a nationalistic one? The Elgin Marbles generate tourism and income for London, bringing millions of visitors a

²⁵⁷ Sultans, 101.

²⁵⁸ Kersel, 52.

²⁵⁹ Kersel, 52.

year to the museum.²⁶⁰ The British Museum hosts private parties for many corporations in the room where the Elgin Marbles are displayed, reaping sizable economic benefits.²⁶¹ If the British Museum did sell the Elgin Marbles, they would be auctioned off at an enormous price, thus providing a potential source of revenue for the British.²⁶² The British are not willing to give up the monetary incentives of possessing the Elgin Marbles without receiving something better in return, weakening the British argument for retention of the Elgin Marbles in London based on national culture and identity.

D. The British in Support of World Heritage

The British bolster their national cultural heritage stance by combining it with world heritage ideology. The Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict from May 14, 1954 states that cultural property is “the cultural heritage of all mankind.”²⁶³ One of the reasons Greece, Great Britain, and the world at large care about the Elgin Marbles is because they are part of human culture and mankind’s common past. The Elgin Marbles and the Parthenon as a whole give us cultural identity, defining and shaping who we are and where we come from. This idea of collective ownership of all cultural heritages is the foundation of world cultural heritage.²⁶⁴ The Elgin Marbles are not part of world heritage only because they are part of cultural heritage in general, but because they have come to symbolize western democracy, art, and culture.

The Parthenon already symbolized all these motifs for Classical Athens, but the west has adopted these sentiments, particularly Periklean rhetoric, thus seeing themselves in the Elgin

²⁶⁰ Jenkins, 7.

²⁶¹ Kersel, 51-52.

²⁶² Merryman, *Thinking*, 55.

²⁶³ Merryman, *Thinking*, 56.

²⁶⁴ Kersel, 47.

Marbles. Greece is the reference point of democracy; it is where democracy originated, so that all modern democracies can feel a connection to ancient Athens as the birth place of their freedom, participating in ancient Greek culture and composing continuous national and world narratives of democracy. The west has adopted and adapted the Parthenon as a cultural symbol of democracy, thus “The temple and its sculptures transcend national boundaries and epitomize universal and enduring values of excellence.”²⁶⁵ The Parthenon and its marbles, including the Elgin Marbles, are emblems of free, civilized, law-abiding, cultured society. Both western nations and the Parthenon Marbles evoke the sentiments found in Perikles’ Funeral Oration, which praises Athenian democracy, culture, art, empire, imperialism, and military might. The liberal ideals of the Funeral Oration, like having an open society to foreigners, have inspired democratic nations,²⁶⁶ influencing their national culture and identity. Thus, the Elgin Marbles and the Parthenon are part of a greater world heritage of democracy, surpassing nationalistic claims, effecting and representing democracy at large in a global arena.

Yet if the Elgin Marbles are part of world heritage, why must they be housed in the British Museum and not restored to Greece? World cultural heritage bases ownership off of three factors: preservation, integrity, and distribution. According to these factors the British Museum’s claim to the Elgin Marbles overrides Greece’s request for repatriation. Though being in London harms the integrity of the monument, the Elgin Marbles are both better preserved and more fully dispersed in London. Despite the New Acropolis Museum, other factors, like the civil unrest and recession, lead the British to doubt Greece’s ability to properly care for the Elgin Marbles. Their biggest concern, however, is distribution. If the Elgin Marbles were held in the New Acropolis Museum, the fragments of the Parthenon would them be less equally dispersed than they are

²⁶⁵ Jenkins, 13-14.

²⁶⁶ Jenkins, 14.

currently, causing less people to see them worldwide. Distribution allows for more people and countries to view other culture's cultural objects, informing them and fostering tolerance through this education.²⁶⁷

Also, distribution and international museums put different nations' cultural objects in context to one another, showing how multiple cultures are pieces of a greater common world heritage puzzle.²⁶⁸ By residing in the British Museum, the Elgin Marbles are part of an international museum, being displayed in a greater world context and serving as ambassadors for Greece. At the time that the marbles were sculpted, Greece was inspired by Egyptian and Assyrian art and culture, so an international museum is the only place where the Elgin Marbles can be showcased in a setting that places artifacts from these different cultures together in one place in relation to each other.²⁶⁹ This allows for the telling of a greater story of all of humanity's achievements by comparing different cultural accomplishments, like comparing the Parthenon frieze to the procession depicted on the Standard of Ur, highlighting cultural similarities and differences.²⁷⁰ The multiplicity of cultures that the British Museum displays enables the museum to be an encyclopedia of the cultural heritage of all mankind, unifying the collections as a whole in context to each other where no culture is privileged but instead cultures inform and are informed by each other. Rather than privileging one nation or culture, as national cultural heritage does, world heritage transcends nationalism to create a universal, ideal, timeless humanity.²⁷¹ It is through distribution and international museums that this tolerant, unifying version of cultural heritage is possible, so that it is essential for the Elgin Marbles to remain in

²⁶⁷ Jenkins, 9.

²⁶⁸ Jenkins, 7-9.

²⁶⁹ Hamilakis, *Nation*, 270.

²⁷⁰ Jenkins, 12.

²⁷¹ Jenkins, 7-11.

the British Museum as cultural ambassadors for Greece, existing in a setting where they can be viewed in a greater world context.

E. World Heritage: Promoting Tolerance or Eurocentric Ideology?

Thus, world heritage makes valid arguments for the retention of the Elgin Marbles in London. However, is the ideology behind world heritage just another form of Eurocentric, globalizing colonization? Just as the British national view of cultural heritage oppresses and culturally colonizes the Greeks, world cultural heritage does so as well. World cultural heritage has the same Eurocentric colonizing impact as British nationalistic soft power colonization does but this time on a global scale. Diversity and difference in cultural heritage are as important for culture as biodiversity is for the environment. If all cultures are consumed by one Western notion of culture then the world loses its diversity and nations and individuals lose their sense of self.

One common cultural heritage for all of mankind is another form of colonization, culturally colonizing the 'other' to a western ideology of a common culture. For this begs the question of whose common culture gets to unite all others? Who gets to decide what is the common cultural heritage of all mankind? A singular cultural heritage for the entire globe is propagated and supported by the west. The common culture of all mankind is based on western ideology. It is western Eurocentric cultural beliefs that formulate the foundation for a common world cultural heritage. Instead of uniting multiple cultures and encouraging tolerance, world cultural heritage masks and oppresses differences by prioritizing and implementing western cultural values, emphasizing the rise and success of democracy, capitalism, and globalization.

In addition to ignoring cultural differences, world heritage adopts and adapts cultural heritages which the west idealizes, like Ancient Athenian democracy. This, however, denies

agency to modern Greece,²⁷² eliminating their control over their history and excluding them from their cultural legacy by making western nations the cultural ancestors of the Periklean Athenians. Greece national claims to their cultural heritage fall on the deaf ears of westerners who support world heritage. These westerners are both blinded by their own beliefs in the global supremacy of western culture and are delusional enough to believe that their culture originates in Classical Athens.

Claiming agency and self-definition in cultural heritage is an essential aspect to national and personal cultural identity, which are components of identity in general. A common world heritage limits this agency, hindering different nations and cultures from producing and supporting their heritages. Instead of controlling their own cultures, nations have a Eurocentric culture placed over theirs, which accepts the aspects of their culture that coincide with western ideology and ignores the differences. The British and the western world, in the case of the Elgin Marbles, put themselves in charge of how Ancient Greek culture is represented through global cultural heritage, which means that in reality they are replacing Greek cultural heritage with a western idealized heritage that composes the ‘other’ in terms easily recognizable and relatable to the west, allowing them to see themselves in Ancient Greek culture.²⁷³ Thus world heritage is potentially a form of soft power colonization, where non-western nations are faced with “forces much like those of that first globalizing era—a homogenizing world capitalism that opposes itself to particularist claims, all of them invoking history as a source of legitimation.”²⁷⁴

The use, display, and manipulation of cultural heritage objects are some of the tools by which world heritage colonizes the culture of the ‘other’. Once world cultural heritage supporters

²⁷² Koundoura, 4.

²⁷³ Koundoura, 59.

²⁷⁴ Steve Vinson, “From Lord Elgin to James Henry Breasted: The Politics of the Past in the First Era of Globalization,” in *Marketing Heritage: Archaeology and the Consumption of the Past*, ed. Yorke Rowman and Uzi Baram (New York and Oxford: Altamira Press, 2004), 64.

get their hands on cultural objects of different nations and cultures, they are displayed in international western museums. In these museums, westerners are paying to view cultural objects with an expectation of seeing them in a display that correlates with western ideology. One way in which these cultural objects are taken out of their context and molded to western beliefs is by the exhibition of them as art rather than as historical objects with context that contribute to cultural heritage and thus identity. Jenkins, a supporter of world cultural heritage and a proponent of British retention, states that by removing the Elgin Marbles from their original context, they are now able to be displayed at eye level, so that “the sculptures were transformed from architectural ornament into objects of art.”²⁷⁵

This is not a positive as Jenkins believes, but instead is evidence of a western bias in the British museum. Shown in this Eurocentric context, the British Museum is altering and manipulating the educational and cultural experience of the viewer. Stripped of their context and exhibited in a fashion that was never intended by the architect, the Elgin Marbles do not provide a ‘real’ experience for the viewer as they were intended to be experienced.²⁷⁶ Instead, due to how they are displayed and the context provided, or rather lack thereof, the Elgin Marbles are examples of fine art. The British Museum’s Eurocentric biases and emphasis on world cultural heritage has allowed the Elgin Marble “to be culturally constructed in the western sense as works of art.”²⁷⁷ Though they hold national symbolic meaning for the British, the way in which the Elgin Marbles are exhibited is as pieces of elite art. As works of art and thus part of a western ideology concerning the importance of cultural objects, the Elgin Marbles take on western significance, allowing the western viewer to see themselves and their beliefs in the Elgin

²⁷⁵ Jenkins, 17.

²⁷⁶ Kersel, 46.

²⁷⁷ St Clair, “Parthenon,” 16-17.

Marbles, investing them with Eurocentric culture, omitting and oppressing Ancient Greek culture and its importance on Modern Greek culture, culturally colonizing Modern Greece.

In the British Museum, displayed based on Eurocentric notions of world cultural heritage, the Elgin Marbles are merely art and are exhibited for consumption by a global (specifically western) audience, not for cultural heritage. The British Museum is giving its western audience what it wants, complying with their ideologies on culture as art. By making the Elgin Marbles western art, divorcing them from their context and cultural significance, the British Museum has turned them into a commodity. Through prioritizing the consumption of the Elgin Marbles as art for aesthetic pleasure, the British have made the Elgin Marbles into another resource to be bought, sold, and consumed, commoditizing them based off of western views of capitalism. The British Museum is marketing cultural property in a western context. The Elgin Marbles have been transformed from political, historical, cultural objects into a commodity with a monetary value.²⁷⁸ Though this value derives in part from the Elgin Marbles symbolic, political, historical, and cultural significance, it is capitalistic ideology that has given an economic value to this symbolism and shoved it into the market as another resource to capitalize on.

Some, like Kersel, view this commoditization as a positive, that the removal of the Elgin Marbles from Greece, though harming Greek national heritage, “has contributed to the increase in their value as an international cultural commodity.”²⁷⁹ Yet being a commodity is not necessarily a good thing. Through capitalistic commoditization, world heritage is simply putting Eurocentric capitalism in place globally, ignoring other discourse on identity, nationalism, globalization, and modernization. The monetary value of the Elgin Marbles comes to take precedence over cultural significance, destroying cultural diversity and culturally colonizing the

²⁷⁸ Kersel, 49.

²⁷⁹ Kersel, 53.

so-called 'other'. As a western capitalistic commodity, cultural heritage objects are divorced from alternative discourses on culture, globalization, and modernity. In a capitalist context there is only one way of being global, one way of being developed, one way of being modern and that is through capitalism. Thus, once again world cultural heritage, with its Eurocentric and capitalistic ideology, is a form of soft power colonization, destroying and oppressing the subaltern and denying the potential of other kinds of culture and ways of life.

As commodities the Elgin Marbles have a price tag and the possession of them comes with economic incentives. The possession of the Elgin Marbles means the possession of something valuable. If sold, they would generate a large amount of money for the owner; in a museum they nourish tourism, even if admission to the museum is free.²⁸⁰ Thus world cultural heritage can be as easily criticized as Greek and British national cultural heritages are for having ulterior motives besides ones of cultural significance. The distribution argument, which plays a prominent role in world cultural heritage beliefs, is not only about creating a greater world context and fostering tolerance, but is concerned with keeping antiquities in museums. Without the distribution argument, international museums face losing a majority of their collections, being bled dry by source countries seeking repatriation of their cultural objects. This would lead to a decline in tourism, which in turn would economically handicap western museums and western tourism. If the Elgin Marbles are returned to Greece, it would set a precedent for restitution which has the potential to deplete the collections of international museums, harming them economically,²⁸¹ putting into question international museums' support of world cultural heritage.

²⁸⁰ Merryman, *Thinking*, 55.

²⁸¹ Merryman, *Thinking*, 35.

The British cultural heritage argument, which combines national and world cultural heritages, makes valid arguments for the retention of the Elgin Marbles in London. The Elgin Marbles are part of British culture and therefore British identity by their two century long residency in London, as well as part of world culture by all culture being part of a singular mankind and by being the foundation of democracy for western cultures. Nationalistic claims mixed with the distribution argument make the British standpoint convincing and logical. The British cultural heritage debate, however, also comes up against heavy criticism when combined with colonialism discourse, especially concerning forms of soft power colonization, which cultural colonization is part of. World cultural heritage is based off of and supported by Eurocentric ideology, focusing on western beliefs of the supremacy of western culture, especially in terms of democracy, capitalism, globalization, development, and modernization. It is necessary to be skeptical of world culture heritage, which can oppress and ignore diversity, blanketing different cultures with one Eurocentric view of the cultural heritage of all mankind, effectively culturally colonizing on a global scale. Though it is essential to realize the importance the Elgin Marbles hold for the British as a nation and for the world at large, it is also imperative that the colonial implications world heritage has on Modern Greece be taken into consideration in assessing whose cultural heritage claim is stronger.

Conclusion

The debate over the Elgin Marbles has evolved and transformed over the last three decades. Though the issue of legality has been decided and the arguments over preservation and integrity are unresolved, the recent cultural heritage argument has added another level of depth to the debate. Unfortunately, the clash between national cultural heritage and world cultural heritage has further complicated the debate over the Elgin Marbles. On a national level, cultural heritage objects materialize and support a nation's continuous national narrative, fostering unity and pride amongst the citizens, thus molding national identity. On a global level, cultural

heritage belongs to a singular mankind, promoting tolerance, distributing heritage to all so that none is culturally impoverished, and valuing preservation above all else.

Yet cultural heritage's effect on individual, the nation, and the world exceeds Anderson's imagined community. Colonialism and post-colonialism discourses build upon Anderson's ideology, showing how cultural heritage and its associated objects can be manipulated as a form of soft power colonization and as terrorism, yet also as a source of empowerment. This discourse is missing from the Elgin Marbles debate and needs to be taken into account so that the Greek and British cultural heritage arguments can be viewed in all of their complexity. It is through colonial and post-colonial discourses that the importance of cultural heritage and its objects can be seen on an individual, regional, national, and world level.

The problem is that cultural heritage is separated into these four categories. Even though the different kinds of cultural heritage may clash at times, they also intersect. The four kinds of cultural heritage are merely pieces of the whole, like the Elgin Marbles. It is not possible to only consider one aspect of cultural heritage, for this ignores the other factors at play. The issue is not whether or not national cultural heritage is more or less important than world cultural heritage. Each kind of cultural heritage is important while being open to criticism. The issue of cultural heritage must be taken as a whole for all its nuances and components to be realized, and only once the full picture is dealt with can the cultural heritage argument lend support to either side of the Elgin Marbles debate.

Yet currently the debate is caught in a web of binaries: us versus them, west versus east, cultured versus barbarian, capitalism versus underdevelopment, and world versus national cultural heritage. There are not simply two opposite ideologies but each is part of a greater whole. It does not have to be one way or the other; it does not have to be seen through a binary

lens which prioritizes one over the other, creating an 'other.' To prevent 'othering,' which is a possible negative effect of both national and world cultural heritage, all aspects of cultural heritage must be taken into account and then critiqued for how they could be culturally colonizing the 'other.' Thus, instead of supporting one side or simplifying the debate, cultural heritage leaves the Elgin Marbles argument even more complex than before. Yet it is only once this complexity is fully realized and its significance understood that cultural heritage can play a decisive role in the debate.

THE END

Images

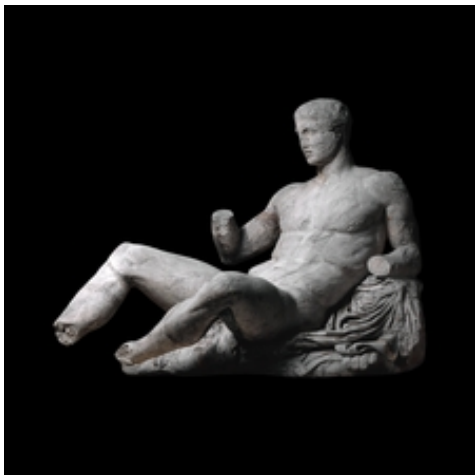


Image 1: Dionysus from the East Pediment. British Museum.



Image 2: South Metope depicting the Centauromachy. British



Image 3: Center scene of the East Frieze showing either the sacrifice or the dedication of the peplos. British Museum.



Image 4: Horsemen from South Frieze. British Museum.



Image 5: The Parthenon. Alexandra Zeman.

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