Destruction and Memory on the Athenian Acropolis

Rachel Kousser

The Parthenon, constructed between 447 and 432 BCE on the Athenian Acropolis, stands as the most lavish, technically refined, and programmatically cohesive temple on the Greek mainland, a fitting commemoration of the Athenians’ spectacular and unexpected victories in the Persian Wars (Fig. 1). The immense, all-marble structure was designed around a colossal statue of Athena Parthenos, depicted by the sculptor Phidias fully armed, and with an image of the goddess of victory, Nike, alighting on her left hand (Fig. 2). In its architectural sculpture as well, the Parthenon repeatedly alluded to the Greeks’ struggle against the Persians, for instance, through famous mythological contests: battles between men and centaurs, Athenians and Amazons, Greeks and Trojans, gods and giants.

An intriguing but rarely noted feature of these battle narratives is that they combine images of effortless victory with those of valiant but unmistakable defeat. The Parthenon’s south metopes, for example, included not only scenes of men triumphing over centaurs but also images of these human protagonists caught, wounded, or trampled to death by their bestial opponents (Fig. 3). So, too, on the west metopes and the shield of Athena Parthenos, we see dead Athenians as well as dead Amazons (Fig. 4, 5). These scenes of loss, although neglected by scholars, were in fact critical to the Parthenon’s visual program; they represented, through the distancing guise of myth, the price paid in human suffering for the achievement of Greek victory.

Scholars have often stressed the thematic importance of the Persian Wars of 490 and 480-479 BCE for the art of Classical Athens, above all, for the Periklean building program on the Acropolis. Yet they have not paid sufficient attention to the Athenians’ most direct experience of the wars: the destruction of their city’s major sanctuaries by the Persians in 480 BCE and the sack of the entire polis in 479 BCE. The visual program of the Parthenon, shot through with scenes of suffering and loss, suggests the merit of reexamining the temple in these terms. So does the building’s site, on the Acropolis—indeed, on the very foundations of an earlier temple destroyed by the Persians.

It is thus heuristically useful to consider the Parthenon as a response to the ancient world’s most famous—and notorious—act of iconoclasm. At the same time, it is important to show how this response was neither inevitable nor easily achieved. It was instead the culmination of a lengthy process, one that is rarely studied, but worth our attention, because it helps to illuminate the end result. This process includes a series of Athenian responses to the Persian sack, from the reuse of architectural fragments in the citadel walls to the sculptural program of the Periklean Parthenon. As the display of damaged objects gave way to reworkings of the story within the timeless world of myth, the memory of the sack became increasingly divorced from its historical foundation.

This analysis of the Parthenon and its antecedents has also a broader significance as part of the history of Orientalism, a topic of much recent interest for scholars of Classical Greece. Philologists have researched the use of Orientalist tropes in various literary genres, while art historians have analyzed such topics as the depiction of Persians in Greek art, the reception of Achaemenid material culture in Athens, and representations of the Persian Wars in public Athenian monuments. One hitherto neglected area of inquiry has been the interconnections between Orientalism and iconoclasm. The destruction of an enemy’s sanctuaries was commonplace in ancient warfare, and had been practiced by Greeks as well as Persians. Yet following the Acropolis sack, such iconoclastic activity came to be seen as a paradigmatic example of “Oriental” impiety and violence. This consistent and highly influential theme of Orientalist discourse originated in the Early Classical period and culminated in the Periklean Parthenon.

The significance of this discourse is twofold. To begin with, it is critical for our interpretation of the Parthenon, which must be understood as a response to the destruction—the desecration—of the Archaic Acropolis sanctuary and its images. In this way, it is connected to a series of Orientalist monuments and texts from Early Classical Greece and adopts their previously established narrative strategies (for instance, the use of mythological analogies for the Persians), albeit in a more comprehensive and far-reaching manner. Seen from an Orientalist perspective, the Parthenon therefore appears less as a unique, unprecedented monument than as part of a well-established tradition, in which works of art helped to preserve and transform the memory of the Persian sack for an Athenian audience. This allows us to appreciate more fully the debt to history of this “timeless” monument.

The Athenians’ extremely effective presentation of the Acropolis sack as a typically barbaric act has also had significant long-term consequences for scholarship in the history of art. As Zainab Bahrani has argued, “Aligning themselves with the ancient Greeks, [scholars] see the mutilation and theft of statues as a barbaric act of violence.” And their conclusions have been shaped by Orientalist Greek texts and monuments, rather than relevant Near Eastern sources: not only have stereotypes been utilized in the interpretation of this [iconoclastic] practice, but a privileging of one type of ancient text over all others has also aided in its perception as a “senseless” act of violence, and thus serves the purposes of the Orientalist model by validating two of its main abstractions as defined by [Edward] Said: Oriental violence and Oriental despotism.

This has complicated the interpretation of Near Eastern iconoclasm, obscuring its connection to deep-seated beliefs regarding the close relation between image and prototype.
A like attitude has had a similarly problematic effect on classical scholarship. It has discouraged the analysis of iconoclasm in Hellenic culture, although well-documented incidents such as the mutilation of the herms in Athens in 415 BCE during the Peloponnesian Wars demonstrate its significance for the Greeks. But the discourse on iconoclasm preserved in Hellenic literary sources—in which it is always the work of barbarians or social deviants—has allowed scholars to characterize the destruction of images in Greek culture as a limited and marginal phenomenon, unworthy of study. In so doing, historians of classical art have arbitrarily closed off a potentially fruitful avenue of approach to their topic. Yet the study of Hellenic iconoclasm has important implications for the role of the image in Greek society.

The Acropolis in 480 BCE: Siege and Destruction

To understand the significance of the Persian sack for the Athenians, it is necessary to consider first the functions and topography of the Acropolis. This rocky outcrop south of the Archaic city center had been inhabited from Mycenaean times onward, and by 480 BCE was both the site of the Athenians’ most important temples and dedications and a well-fortified citadel. On this prominent, highly visible site were located two major buildings. To the north stood the Late Archaic Temple of Athena Polias, which housed a revered olive-wood statue of the goddess, so old that the Athenians believed it had fallen from heaven. To the south was an all-marble temple (the so-called Older Parthenon), likely initiated after the first Persian War in 490 BCE, and still under construction; at the time of the sack, the building reached only to the height of the third column drum. Besides these major temples, the site accommodated a number of more modest but still significant constructions: a monumental ramp and gateway to the Acropolis, a great altar, a shrine to Athena Nike, and a series of small-scale buildings generally identified as sacred treasuries, whose architectural adornment has
been preserved but whose foundations have not survived, due to later rebuilding on the site.  

Complementing this architectural ensemble was an impressive population of statues and other votive dedications. Best known are the korai, which numbered at least fifty at the time of the sack (Figs. 6, 8); there were also a series of equestrian statues, like the Rampin Rider, as well as victory monuments, such as the dedication of Kallimachos, which likely commemorated this military leader’s role in the Athenian victory at Marathon in 490 BCE. Such costly marble statues were most often set up by the wealthy, but we have as well more humble votives: black- and red-figure vases, terracotta reliefs, bronze figurines, and cult equipment. As even this brief list of monuments suggests, the maps and models of the Late Archaic Acropolis are thus somewhat misleading. In addition to the major buildings they show, we have to imagine a space crammed with objects of all sorts, everywhere; this was for the Athenians the best way to pay tribute to the numinous power that suffused the entire site.

These buildings and monuments offer abundant testimony to the sacred character of the Late Archaic Acropolis. Yet although the Athenians themselves, and, subsequently, modern scholars, have tended to focus on this aspect, the site’s strategic importance in 480 BCE is also clear. In fact, this dual nature of the Acropolis—as both citadel and sanctuary—helps to explain the thoroughness of the Persians’ destruction of the site and, at the same time, the vehemence of the Athenians’ response to it.

In 480, the Acropolis was fortified all around with ancient and imposing walls, constructed of immense, irregularly shaped boulders, which identifies them as Mycenean in origin (Fig. 7). Within these ancient walls, augmented at the top by new wooden palisades, the defenders of Athens made their last stand against the Persians. The story is given in Herodotos, who provides our only extensive account of the Persian sack; his description, moreover, can be corroborated at many points by the archaeological evidence. According to Herodotos, the defenders of the citadel were few in number, since most Athenians had agreed to abandon the city; following the plan of their general, Themistokles, they had sailed to the nearby island of Salamis and staked their hopes on a naval victory. But those who remained in Athens put up a valiant defense, manning the walls and rolling down boulders onto the oncoming Persians. Their defenses failed at last only because the Persians came up the difficult east side of the Acropolis, which the Athenians had left unguarded. The defenders, overwhelmed, threw themselves off the citadel walls or sought sanctuary in the Temple of Athena Polias, where they were massacred by the Persians. The new masters of the citadel tore down the walls, then plundered and set fire to the buildings within.

It is important to stress that this was, in terms of wartime strategy, an eminently sensible decision by the Persians. The Acropolis had served as Athens’s citadel from Mycenean times onward; it was a well-fortified and defensible military site, not just a collection of temples. Given that the Persians did not intend to use it themselves, they were well advised to destroy it, lest it prove again a formidable base of operations for the Athenians.

However, the Persians in 480 went far beyond what might be considered militarily useful. As the archaeological remains testify, they not only destroyed the citadel’s walls—which were, from a strategic point of view, the logical target—but also burned the temples, tore down their architectural adornment, attacked statues, overturned reliefs, smashed pots. Although recent scholars have correctly challenged the traditional view (in which all damage to Archaic material was automatically attributed to the vindictive Persians), enough evidence remains to suggest that this was a quite impressively thoroughgoing and targeted effort.

The damage wrought by the Persians can be clearly seen in their treatment of statues. To begin with, it is useful to consider the monument of Kallimachos mentioned above, with an inscribed column topped by a sculpted figure of Nike or possibly Iris, messenger of the gods. About sixteen and a half feet (five meters) tall and set up in a prominent location northeast of the Older Parthenon, it was a highly visible celebration of the lopsided Athenian victory over the Persians at Marathon; according to Herodotos, 6,400 Persians perished in the battle to 192 Athenians. Kallimachos’s monument appears to have attracted particular attention during the Acropolis sack. The inscribed column was broken into
more than one hundred pieces, while the statue had its face smashed and its body cut in two.

Elsewhere on the Acropolis, mutilated statues proliferate. One kore had her head, feet, and arms broken off; her body was also cut off at the knees—modern restoration has left traces of the ancient action visible—and the torso attacked, notably around the breasts and buttocks (Fig. 8). To judge from the long, narrow scars, this was done with an ax. The head of another kore was likewise attacked with an ax, whose marks are visible particularly in a long cut to the back of the head, made as though to split the skull. These are only the most obvious cases; other statues manifest traces of burning, their surfaces pitted with small black marks or signs of thermal fracture analogous to those seen in the column drums of the Older Parthenon. Or the noses, cheeks, or chins have been smashed with what looks like a hammer or mallet (Fig. 6); on male statues, the same weapon seems often to have been turned against their genitalia.

Recently, scholars have argued that the destructiveness of the Persian sack has been exaggerated, and that more allowance should be made for accident and for later Athenian actions. It is, of course, reasonable to see some injuries as accidental. The heads, arms, and feet of statues are necessarily fragile and tend to break off, even without iconoclastic effort. Other injuries are harder to explain in this way—breaks at the waist, one of the thickest and most solid parts of sculptures—and many bear traces of human effort, such as the ax and hammer marks described above. It has been proposed that the Athenians themselves might have injured some Archaic sculptures to desacralize them before burial—beheading them as a form of “quasi-ritual ‘killing’”—but this seems to me unlikely. As close observation of the statues shows, the damage follows predictable patterns, and the marks of beheading are congruent with those observed on sculptures clearly attacked by the Persians, as on the Acropolis kore attacked with an axe (Fig. 8). They are also congruent with material that can be associated with Persian attacks on other cities, and more broadly with attacks on statues elsewhere in the Ancient Near East. I would therefore see the broken, battered, and beheaded statues of the Archaic Acropolis as predominantly Persian, not Athenian, handiwork.

An illuminating contrast may be drawn between the Acropolis statues injured by the Persians and the grave monuments taken down and reused by the Athenians to rebuild their city wall in 479 BCE. Some scholars have sought to read the reworking and reuse of these grave monuments as highly motivated, whether as the defacement of the images of the old aristocracy by the new postwar democrats or as the enlistment of powerful heroic ancestors in defense of the city. Catherine Keesling has suggested that in some cases, at least, faces were obliterated in order to deprive the statues of their “power” prior to incorporation in the wall. Close observation of the sculptures, however, casts doubt on these theories. While the Acropolis statues were injured in a manner that might have been directed toward live human beings—throats slit, hands and feet cut off—the grave monuments appear more arbitrarily and pragmatically altered. For reliefs, projecting surfaces were smoothed down (such as National Museum, Athens, inv. nos. 5826, 2687), and monuments in the round were lopped and trimmed to approximate, insofar as possible, foursquare blocks (such as Kerameikos Museum,
Athens, inv. no. P 1052). In both cases, the sculptures were treated in a manner designed to enhance their usefulness within their new setting: the Themistoklean wall, rebuilt in haste by the Athenians just after the conclusion of the Persian Wars. The grave monuments from the lower city of Athens thus furnish a useful example of the pragmatic despoliation and reuse of images, whereas the Acropolis sculptures exemplify the programmatic mutilation of works of art.

On the Acropolis, the attacks on sculptures, and the destruction of the sanctuary more broadly, must have demanded lengthy and painstaking effort. Why was it necessary? To answer this question, one should begin by stressing that Athens was not the only city to suffer such an attack at the hands of the Persians. Their invading armies had destroyed as well, for example, temples of Apollo at Eretria, Abae, and Didyma.
abducted images in a number of cities: the statue of Artemis Brauronia from Brauron, of Apollo from Didyma, and of Marduk from Babylon; from Athens itself, they took the first version of the Tyrannicides monument, subsequently returned from Susa to its place in the Athenian Agora by Alexander the Great or one of the Seleucids. The Persian activity in Athens could be taken to be part of a broader cultural practice, which has been documented as well for other ancient Near Eastern cultures, such as the Medes, Babylonians, and Elamites. As Bahrani has pointed out, these incidents were by no means random. Rather, they testify to the widespread ancient Near Eastern belief that the image could function as a substitute, an uncanny double, for the person or god represented; therefore, damage to the image could injure the prototype also, even beyond the grave.

Although such convictions were denigrated, or even rejected, in Greek philosophical speculation, they can frequently be discerned in Panhellenic myth as well as local religious practices. They appear, for example, in the myth of the Abduction of the Palladion, in which Odysseus and Diomedes abduct the statue of Pallas Athena that protects Troy; only then can the city be taken. This popular myth indicates that the Greeks also found a powerful connection between the physical form of the statue and the god it represented. So does the Greek practice of chaining down potentially wayward statues, regularly attested in the literary sources, as well as the frequent resort to dolls inhabited by spirits in magic rites. And historical incidents—such as the mutilation of the herms during the Peloponnesian Wars, or the destruction of the portraits of Philip V and his ancestors in 200 BCE—demonstrate that later Athenians at least were well aware of the powerful effects such iconoclastic acts could have, for good or ill. What is distinctive in Greek attitudes toward iconoclasm seems to be the manner in which it was both practiced and problematized—often typed as barbaric or deviant, yet recurrent in Hellenic culture.
It consequently seems reasonable to assume that the Greeks recognized and understood the motivations behind the Persian sack of the Acropolis. Indeed, their own previous actions may have constituted a concrete historical precedent for it. According to Herodotos (5.102), the Persians justified their attack as retaliation for Athens's involvement in the sack of the Persian provincial capital Sardis, including the destruction of the temple of Cybele there, in 499.\textsuperscript{58} Notoriety has attached itself to the Persian sack of the Athenian Acropolis, rather than, say, Sardis or Eretria, not because it was unusual at the time but because of the extraordinary ways in which the Athenians chose to commemorate it; their actions thus merit scrutiny next.

**Initial Athenian Responses, 479–447 BCE: Ruins, Relics, and Ritual Burial**

Following their final victory over the Persians at the Battle of Plataia in 479, the Athenians returned to their city to confront a desolate landscape of broken statues and smoke-scarred temples. As is well known, they did not undertake a large-scale rebuilding of the temples on the Acropolis until the initiation of the Parthenon in 447, some thirty years later.\textsuperscript{86} In the interval, they were by no means inactive. Rather, they engaged in a number of commemorative practices—creating, in essence, ruins, relics, and ritual burials—whose traces in the landscape were significant for the development of the citadel later on. These practices have also their own inherent interest, as a series of attempts by the Athenians to come to terms with, to represent, and sometimes to conceal the trauma of the Persian sack. In this way, they help to illustrate the workings of the collective memory of the Athenians in the Early Classical period. The commemorative actions took two forms: practices involving the damaged terrain of the Acropolis itself, and Early Classical representations of the Persian Wars in literature and art. Taken together, they show the manner in which the destruction of monuments began to be depicted by the Greeks as exclusively, and characteristically, barbaric—a paradigmatic example of the Persians' capacity for senseless violence. Typified as something Greeks did not do, iconoclasm became "other," a development with important consequences for the future.

In recent years, scholars have paid particular attention to the question of which monuments, precisely, were destroyed by the Persians.\textsuperscript{65} Beginning with Jeffrey Hurwit in 1989, these scholars have reexamined the evidence for the destruction layer on the Acropolis (the so-called Persenschutt); the emphasis has been on using archaeological evidence to identify which deposits consisted solely of Archaic material and which were mixed, incorporating sculptures of later date also. The goal has been to elucidate, with greater precision, the chronological development of Greek sculpture; this has been most recently and thoroughly carried out by Andrew Stewart.\textsuperscript{51}

While my research is much indebted to these scholars, my approach and aims are different. I draw on a wider range of evidence (including historical and epigraphic sources as well as archaeology) to analyze the Athenians' interventions on the Acropolis during the Early Classical period; my focus is on the varied strategies they adopted in order to come to terms with the Persian sack. In consequence, I have paid more attention to the architectural remains, whether left in ruins or used as spolia. At the same time, I have concentrated on those monuments that are demonstrably Archaic in date and that were therefore available to the Persians at the time of the sack.\textsuperscript{52} They seem to me to offer the clearest and most concrete evidence for what the Athenians did in response to the Persians' actions.

Let us begin with what was, significantly, not done, that is, with the temples left in ruins. Taken together, the literary, epigraphic, and archaeological evidence suggests that the temples on the Acropolis remained virtually as the Persians had left them, with the possible exception of some shoring up of the Temple of Athena Polias.\textsuperscript{53} The treatment of the ruined temples constituted the most notable of the commemorative practices adopted by the Athenians and must have had the most far-reaching impact on the inhabitants' lived experience. After all, in the Archaic period, these had been the preeminent religious buildings of Athens and the culmination of the most important festival, the Panathenaia. They continued to preside over acts of worship—the very day after the sack, the Persian King Xerxes had his Athenian followers carry out sacrifices on the Acropolis—and it must have been quite striking for the Athenians to conduct their obsequies among ruins, for a period of thirty years.\textsuperscript{54} Even for those who rarely ventured to the citadel, there would have been indications of the destruction in Athens's skyline. The Archaic temples of the Acropolis were substantial, prominently placed buildings, and the largest among them, the Temple of Athena Polias, must have been visible from afar, just as the Parthenon is today. And then they were gone. Especially in the immediate aftermath of the sack, the absence of these familiar landmarks must itself have represented a kind of presence, a constant reminder of what was no longer there.

Such reminders were, it should be said, by no means restricted to Athens. Even in the second century CE (that is, some six hundred years after the Persian Wars), the Greek travel writer Pausanias claimed he saw temples scarred by the Persians: the Temple of Hera on Samos, of Athena at Phocaea, of Hera on the road to Phaleron, of Demeter at Phaleron, of Apollo at Abae, and all the temples in the territory of Haliartus.\textsuperscript{87}

Later literary sources, and most modern scholars, have explained these ruined temples with reference to oaths sworn by the Greeks, most famously, in the case of Athens, the much debated "Oath of Plataia." According to the late-fourth-century Athenian orator Lykourgos, the Greeks fighting at the Battle of Plataia in 479 BCE promised that "of all the temples burned and thrown down by the barbarians I will rebuild none, but I will leave them as a memorial for future generations of the impiety of the barbarians" (Against Leokrates 81).\textsuperscript{88} A similar oath was sworn by the Ionians, according to Isokrates, an earlier-fourth-century orator (Panegyricus 155–57). The Plataia Oath is also given, with some alterations, by the first-century BCE historian Diodorus Siculus (11.29.3–4), and Pausanias (10.35.2) explains the ruined temples at Abae and Phaleron in analogous terms during the Roman period. There thus arose in the fourth century, if not earlier, a very consistent and frequently replicated literary discourse linking the ruins to memory, with each smoke-scarred temple func-
tioning as a memorial (hypomnemata) to Oriental violence and impiety.

These oaths, although convenient explanations for the ruined temples, are problematic, the "Oath of Plataia" particularly so. It does not appear in contemporary fifth-century sources; its absence in Herodotos, with his very full account of the Battle of Plataia, is particularly striking. So, too, the Plataia Oath is given differently on the only other fourth-century source for it, an inscribed stela set up in Acharnæ, where the "temples clause" is left out: Athenian accounts of it were attacked as "falsified" by the fourth-century historian Theopompos; and Lykourgos is demonstrably inaccurate on historical questions elsewhere in his speech. Finally, in the case of Athens, at least, the oath was conspicuously violated by the construction of a series of temples from the mid-fifth century BCE on, including not only the Parthenon but also the Temple of Poseidon at Sounion, Nemesis at Rhamnous, and Athena at Pallene, all on the sites of Attic sanctuaries destroyed by the Persians.

Clearly, the written sources on the Plataia Oath are in tension with one another, as well as with the archaeological evidence. Scholars have struggled to reconcile them, proposing, for example, that the oath may have been abrogated after the conclusion in about 450 BCE of a final peace treaty with Persia. In support of this theory, some have cited a passage in Plutarch's Pericles (17), describing what is known to modern scholars as the Congress Decree. According to Plutarch, this decree of about 450 BCE invited the Greek cities to a meeting in Athens, to discuss, among other matters, "the Greek temples which the barbarians had burnt"; when the Spartans refused to attend, the idea was dropped. The account in Plutarch, if accurate, could help to justify Athenian rebuilding at this time; the Athenians could claim to have sought a Panhellenic solution to the issue of the destroyed temples before acting unilaterally. However, the authenticity of the Congress Decree, like that of the Plataia Oath, has frequently been questioned; as it is preserved in only one source, written over five hundred years after the event, skepticism is perhaps in order.

Therefore, rather than placing stress on a formal Panhellenic oath or decree, the existence of which is difficult to prove, I would emphasize instead how the Athenians acted—leaving the temples in ruins for the first thirty years, and then gradually beginning the process of reconstruction, with the Parthenon first, then the other temples on the Acropolis, and continuing even into the fourth century with sanctuaries such as that of Apollo Patroos in the Agora. Moreover, it is noteworthy that these temples, set up to replace the ones destroyed by the Persians, still coexisted with monuments more visibly connected to the sack. Herodotos, for instance, saw walls scarred by the fires of the Persian sack on the Acropolis, and Pausanias recorded blackened and battered statues of Athena there as well. It is even possible that the back room of the Temple of Athena Polias survived the sack and was shored up enough to be used until the Erechtheion, a small Ionic temple, was completed at the end of the fifth century BCE; this, at any rate, is suggested by inscriptions that refer to precious offerings stored in the "Opisthodomos" (the Greek term for the back room of a temple), and Xenophon's notice that the "ancient temple of Athena Polias" burned down only in 406/5 BCE.

Fragments of the ruined temples were also preserved and displayed as part of the rebuilt walls of the citadel (Figs. 9, 10). Here we are on more secure ground than with the "Opisthodomos," since besides literary sources putting the rebuilt walls in the Early Classical period, we have the archaeological evidence of the walls themselves and of the excavations conducted in association with them. There are two
major stretches of the rebuilt walls with temple fragments: the first northwest of the present-day Erechtheion, containing parts of the entablature of the Temple of Athena Polias (Fig. 9), and the second northeast of the Erechtheion, incorporating marble column drums of the Older Parthenon (Fig. 10).

It has been argued that the reuse of these fragments was pragmatic, an economical choice in the aftermath of a costly war, but I do not find this convincing. The fragments are too carefully arranged; the stretch northwest of the Erechtheion, for example, included the architrave, triglyph-metope frieze, and cornice from the Temple of Athena Polias, the blocks arranged just as they would have been on the temple itself. In addition, the fragments appear too unwieldy for use on purely pragmatic grounds; the column drums, for example, weigh seven tons each, and there are twenty-nine of them. Nor are the fragments selected those that were best adapted to building a wall; plenty of plain rectangular blocks in the temples were available, but these were not the ones chosen. Instead, what we see are the most distinctively templelike architectural fragments, arranged in a manner that seems insistently to recall their former purpose—the column drums lined up in a row, the entablature extended to a distance very close to the length of the original temple. From significant viewing locations within the lower city, such as the Agora, they are even now highly visible; for Early Classical viewers, they would have been yet more striking, as they originally would have been brightly painted.

Such an arrangement, I believe, was not accidental. It was, rather, a carefully calculated form of commemoration, although its meaning for the Athenians is disputed. It has recently been interpreted by Hurwit as "a moving display of ruins high above the city of Athens, looming testimony to Persian sacrilege, an eternal lament." It is true that the fragments on display were powerful because of their direct connection to the Persian sack, because of their, as it were, participation in Athens's suffering. But without denying the sorrowful and commemorative function of the reused materials, I feel it is also important to stress that their incorporation within the walls of the citadel—strong, high, well built—made them equally emblems of power and pride. After all, the war they commemorated brought suffering to Athens but also, eventually, victory.

The kind of commemoration displayed in the citadel walls was appropriate to the period in which they were created, soon after the conclusion of the Persian Wars. Although we cannot pin down the chronology of every section of the walls with absolute certainty, we have archaeological and architectural evidence setting the construction of the relevant sections of the north wall shortly after the war. The building of the wall came in conjunction with broader efforts to reshape the landscape of the Acropolis, as terracing helped to produce a more level and larger surface area. Interestingly, it is in the fill of these terraces that we find the great Archaic sculptures of the Acropolis: the pediments of the Athena Polias Temple, the freestanding equestrians, and, especially, the korai. Best documented is a cache of at least nine statues damaged in the Persian sack, which were found directly behind the section of the north wall containing the ruins of the Athena Polias Temple. It is clear that the statues were buried and the wall constructed at the same time; this can be dated soon after the wars on the basis of numismatic evidence.

The two actions—the burial of statues and the display of architectural fragments—show interrelated but differing responses to material damaged in the sack of the Acropolis. Whereas the damaged architectural fragments were converted, through reuse in the citadel walls, into a symbol of
Although, as Pausanias (1.27.6) tells us, a few were displayed in their ruined state, the vast majority were simply buried. Perhaps the corporeal form of the statues made their appearance too distressing for viewers; even today, there is something viscerally upsetting about seeing their faces smashed, their throats slit, and their hands and feet broken off. As religious votives, though, they could not simply be thrown out. So the sculptures were assembled together and carefully buried within the sacred space of the Acropolis, where they remained—in a remarkable state of preservation, even their paint still fresh—until disinterred at the end of the nineteenth century.

Thus, in the years following the Persian destruction of the Acropolis, we can observe the Athenians experimenting with a range of different responses to the sack. One response was simply to leave things as they were, memorializing the destruction through the ruins it created; this was the course followed with the major temples. A second option was to reuse the damaged artifacts so as to recall, in programmatic fashion, both the attack itself and the eventual Athenian victory, as architectural fragments from the destroyed temples were used to build the new walls of the citadel. And a third option was to erase, insofar as possible, the memory of the destruction, by burying the statues that so viscerally recalled it.

In addition to these commemorative strategies, closely connected to the ruins themselves, we have evidence for a few monuments of a more distanced and creative character. Most significant among them was the colossal bronze Athena by Pheidias, set up on the Acropolis in about 467-447 BCE (Fig. 11). Facing the sanctuary’s entrance, it was placed on axis with the ruined Temple of Athena Polias, as is demonstrated by the foundations of the statue’s immense base, preserved in situ. Like the north wall, and the (still-standing?) ruins themselves, the statue perhaps served to remind viewers of the traumas of the Persian sack. At the same time, it served to evoke prouder, more triumphant memories; the goddess looked toward Salamis, site of Athens’s great naval victory over the Persians. In later literary sources, at least, the colossal statue commemorated Athens’s military success in a very direct and specific way; according to Pausanias, it was “a tithe from the Persians who landed at Marathon,” while Demosthenes declared it “dedicated by the city as a memorial of the war against the barbarians, the Greeks giving the money for it.”

The siting and funding for the statue are relatively well documented, but its appearance can be reconstructed only in a very schematic, hypothetical manner. Fabricated from an exceptionally valuable and easily recyclable material, bronze, it was melted down, and it left scant traces in the artistic record. A few points can, however, be made. The first concerns its colossal scale, so immense, according to Pausanias (1.28.2), that sailors coming into port could see the sun glinting off the tip of the statue’s spear. The statue was also tremendously expensive, as the fragmentarily preserved building accounts for it testify; constructed over a period of nine years, it is estimated to have cost about 83 talents. At a time when the annual tribute from the Athenian Empire equaled about 400 talents, this was an extraordinary sum to be spending on a single work of art. The bronze Athena therefore stands as the largest, most ambitious statue known to us in the Early Classical period; particularly in the years preceding the construction of the Parthenon, it must have dominated the Acropolis and provided an eye-catching landmark for the entire city. In this way, it offered a striking and unsubtle assertion of Athens’s resurgence after the Persian Wars.

The statue’s visual program may likewise have alluded to the wars, albeit in a more oblique and metaphorical manner. According to Pausanias (1.28.2), the statue’s shield was decorated with images of the battle between men and centaurs. This choice of decoration was highly significant; it was the Athenians’ first attempt, on the Acropolis, to represent the Persian Wars through myth. The statue’s decoration can be seen to foreshadow the more elaborate mythological program of the Parthenon, with its centaurs, Amazons, Trojans, and giants. That such a representation was indeed plausible for the Early Classical period is best demonstrated by other works of art and literature from the era.


After the decisive Hellenic victory at Plataia in 479 BCE, Greek artists, poets, and orators began almost immediately to produce works inspired by the Persian Wars. Whether ostensibly “historical” in nature or of a more allusive, mythological character, these artistic productions all aimed to highlight the broader resonances of the wars for a Greek audience seeking to understand their extraordinary and unexpected military success. These poems, speeches, and artworks of the Early Classical period presented the wars as a struggle between polar opposites: pious, self-controlled, freedom-loving Greeks versus impious, uncontrollably violent Persians ruled by an autocratic monarch. Furthermore, these works often treated the desecration of temples and images as a paradigmatic example of Persian impiety and violence, as discussed...
above. The representations of the Persian Wars in Early Classical literature and art, mythological as well as more historical treatments, reveal interconnections between Orientalism and iconoclasm that anticipated the treatment of the same themes in the Parthenon.

Among the most prominent and influential Orientalist monuments of Early Classical Athens was the Stoa Poikile. Commissioned by Peisianax, the brother-in-law of the important politician Kimon, this multifunctional civic structure was erected in the northwest corner of the Athenian Agora in about 470–60 BCE. The building’s foundations are preserved and have recently been excavated; long gone, however, are the paintings that were its most distinctive and significant feature. These included depictions of the Trojan War and its aftermath, the fight between Athenians and Amazons, and the Athenian victory over the Persians at Marathon in 490 BCE (Pausanias 1.15.1–16.1). The paintings thus juxtaposed mythological with historical wars, suggesting analogies between them. This proved a useful, and very influential, narrative strategy. Through this juxtaposition, the victors at Marathon were placed on par with the great Hellenic heroes, whereas the Persians were characterized as analogous to their impious and womanly opponents. Set up in the Athenian civic center, commissioned by a close relative of the era's leading politician, and executed by major artists, the Stoa Poikile brought myth and history together into a highly effective synthesis; its significance is demonstrated by its reflection in later artworks, as well as by the numerous references to it in literary texts.

Elsewhere in Athens as well, paintings on mythological themes were deployed allusively to commemorate recent history. One such is a shrine to the Athenian hero Theseus, featuring as its decoration scenes from the hero's life, including his battles with centaurs and Amazons. The shrine also held Theseus's bones, providentially discovered by Kimon on Skyros, exhumed, and brought to Athens in 475 BCE. Like the Stoa Poikile, then, the shrine to Theseus had a clear connection to contemporary politics, particularly those of Kimon; its paintings were also executed by some of the same artists. It consequently seems reasonable to assume that here as well the paintings were intended to commemorate the Persian Wars, with the centaurs and Amazons standing in for the bestial and effeminate Persians. This hypothesis is strengthened by an analysis of contemporary vase paintings. In the Early Classical period, vases decorated with Amazons strikingly emphasized both the Athenian protagonists in the battle—with Theseus to the fore—and the "Oriental" character of the warrior women, who wear the soft, floppy headgear and brightly patterned costumes of Persians and fight, like them, with bow and arrow or on horseback. On a red-figure dinos (a large mixing bowl) attributed to the Group of Polygnotos, for example, a nude Theseus lunges forward to attack the fallen Amazon Andromache; both are identified by inscriptions (Fig. 12). While Andromache herself wears the costume of a Greek hoplite, she is armed with a bow and empty quiver as well as a small ax, likewise popular in Persian scenes; her comrades riding in on horseback sport a mix of Persian and Hellenic dress and weaponry. Another Amazon, on the reverse, stabs a Greek from behind—a cowardly action associated with her highly Orientalized costume. Similar scenes recur elsewhere, especially in the works of the vase painter Polygnotos and his circle, working in Athens in about 450 BCE. They provide abundant testimony to the assimilation of Amazons and Persians (a practice already visible from the Late Archaic era), and to the denigration of the latter, as the Amazons are depicted as ungalant, ineffective warriors.

In literary texts, similar analogies between mythological and historical foes were drawn, likewise to the detriment of the Persians. In newly discovered fragments, the Keian poet Simonides exalted the Greeks who died at Plataia by comparing them to the Homeric heroes Achilles and Patroklos; the Persians, by contrast, were implicitly equated with the Trojans, including the "evil-minded" (kakophron) Paris.
fragments also mentioned a “chariot of Justice,” perhaps fighting on the Greek side; this, too, appears to inject a moralizing tone into the depiction of the war.  

A comparably moralizing tone sounds even more clearly in Hellenic oratory. According to Herodotos (9.27), the Athenians gained the honor of leading the left wing at the Battle of Plataia by means of a speech they made in which they enumerated all their great deeds from heroic times to the present. In their speech, the Athenians described themselves as the defenders of the weak and unjustly treated — having aided the children of Herakles against the proud and tyrannical Eurystheus and ensured the pious burial of the Seven against Thebes — as well as the upholders of a tradition of Greek victory stretching from the battle against the Amazons to Troy and Marathon. So, too, the epitaphioi logoi (annual funerary orations for Athens’ war dead, buried at public expense) presented the city’s great deeds as both glorious and morally righteous; characteristic examples included Mardonios’s offer of an alliance in 479 BCE, the Athenians declared that it was this destruction furnished a very extensive catalog of the Persian destruction of temples and statues; besides Xerxes’ attack on the Athenian Acropolis, he listed Cambyses’ burning of the statues of the Kabeiroi at Memphis in Egypt (3.37), Darius’s plundering and burning of the Temple of Apollo at Didyma (6.19), the same king’s sack of the sanctuaries of Eretria (6.101), Xerxes’ destruction of the Temple of Apollo at Abae (8.33), and his desecration of the cult statue of Poseidon at Potidaea (8.129). For Herodotos, then, iconoclasm appeared as a long-standing and frequently repeated tactic of Persian war making, deployed against other foreigners (the Egyptians, for one) as well as Greeks.

Later historians echoed Herodotos’s conclusions. In his history of the Peloponnesian Wars, Thucydides rarely mentioned the destruction of temples and images; in an account of battles between Greeks, it ought not to have occurred. In the exceptional instance when it happened — when the Athenians occupied and fortified a Boeotian sanctuary at Delium — it was condemned in speeches as contrary to “universal custom” and “the law of the Hellenes” (4.97), thus bolstering Herodotos’s point by arguing its converse. For Polybius, by contrast, the desecration of temples and cult statues signaled the hubristic overreaching and barbaric — indeed, mentally deranged — character of the Macedonian King Philip V; in the pragmatic author’s words, “the excessive destroying of temples and statues and all their furnishings, which neither offers aid to one’s own affairs in preparing resistance, nor cripples the enemy going in to battle — how can one not say that this is the act of a maddened mind and attitude?” (5.11.4–5). Philip, in Polybius’s view, would have done better to follow the example of his predecessor Alexander the Great, who in his conquest of Persia “spared the things dedicated to the gods, although it was in this way that the Persians had most erred when in Greece” (5.10.8).

Given the importance accorded to Persian iconoclasm in literary texts, we might fruitfully inquire whether it figured in Greek art as well. Here the evidence is more limited, and less explicit. Greek vase paintings occasionally depicted Persians, but they were most commonly shown in battle scenes, not sacking cities or destroying temples. We do, however, have numerous Early Classical images of a city sacked, its sanctuaries violated, and its inhabitants killed. The city in question is Troy. Scholars have suggested that these scenes, for instance, on the famous Vivenzio hydria (water jug) in Naples, were inspired by the Athenian artists’ experiences during the Persian Wars. To speculate further, one might say that the images of the violation of sanctuary in particular — Priam killed while seated on an altar, Kassandra torn by Ajax from a statue of Athena — referenced the Acropolis sack, universalized through the invocation of canonical Hellenic myth. If this hypothesis is correct, then the scenes provided a way of representing the Persian destruction of the Acropolis that was very different in character from the ruins and reliefs discussed above. Here not just the aftereffects but the sack itself was shown, its violent and impious slaughter placed center stage. At the same time, it was distanced through the use of myth, with the real Athenians killed in 480 BCE replaced by the suffering Trojans. This narrative strategy, in which myth served to exalt history and simultaneously to
permit a contemplative distance from it, would subsequently be deployed to great advantage by the sculptors of the Parthenon.

Victory Monument and War Memorial: The Construction of the Parthenon, 447–432 BCE

By 417 BCE, the Athenians inhabited a very different city from the one destroyed by the Persians. They had scored a series of military successes against their old enemies, most prominently the Battle of the Eurymedon of about 466, and their city had become by far the preeminent naval power in Greece. Athens’s internal politics were radically democratic, its foreign policy, imperialistic; the conjunction of the two encouraged massive spending on public works projects such as the Parthenon, overseen by a committee and completed in the remarkably brief span of fifteen years. In its visual form—above all, in its costly materials, complex iconographic program, and technically sophisticated style of execution—the great temple constituted both document and celebration of these achievements; as such, it functioned as a victory monument, as noted by many scholars. But this triumphal rhetoric, so ably communicated by the Parthenon, should not obscure the building’s debt to the past and its role in commemorating past suffering. In fact, it was only through the evocation of this suffering that the achievements of the present took on meaning—the glittering triumphs of the new Athenian Empire thrown into sharp relief, as it were, against the background of a darker and more difficult history.

In the Parthenon, this history was made manifest in a number of different ways. As Andrew Stewart has recently demonstrated, the building’s proportions related it to the destroyed Temple of Athena Polias; the width of the Parthenon’s cela equaled that of the platform of the earlier temple, almost 70 feet (21.3 meters), or 72 Attic feet. The same 72-foot module was used throughout the Periklean building program, determining as well the Propylaia’s east and west porches, the Erechtheion’s entire western side, and the length of its cela. Moreover, the Erechtheion and Parthenon are two modules apart at their nearest point; the Parthenon’s western terrace lies one module to the east of the Propylaia’s projected central axis, and the shrine of Kekrops (an extension of the Erechtheion’s western side) is four modules distant from the Propylaia’s east porch.

The pervasive use of this module cannot be chance; rather, it must reflect the architect’s intention to incorporate within the new building program a trace of the past, by this means to make the destroyed temple live again. These elements indicate the careful comprehensiveness with which the Periklean building program was planned, as each building was at once connected to its fellows and to its ruined antecedent.

For those without the architect’s advanced technical knowledge, however, other connections to the past would have been more striking. Two seem particularly significant here. One was the Parthenon’s direct physical connection to the past, as the building occupied the site, and utilized the materials, of its ruined predecessor. The second was the temple’s metaphorical connection to past history, as the conflict between Athens and Persia was retold and reconfigured through myth. Taken together, these differing but complementary commemorative strategies helped to create a temple balanced between opposing tensions, both victory monument and war memorial. In this way, they contributed to the sense of balance, and of the reconciliation of opposites, that is so characteristic a feature of the Parthenon.

In their “recycling” of building materials, the architects of the Parthenon were particularly ingenious but by no means unique. The builders of a Classical wall and footbridge at Eleusis likewise reused materials from the Archaic sanctuary, as their epigraphic accounts describe in detail. Elsewhere on the Acropolis we have evidence for recycling, for instance, the flight of steps west of the Parthenon, constructed from blocks of the Temple of Athena Polias. Still, the Parthenon stands out in this respect for the extent of material recycled and the limitations this placed on the design of the new temple. To begin with, the building occupied the footprint of its ruined predecessor, a massive limestone podium some thirty-six feet (eleven meters) high on its southern side (Fig. 13). The only change was a sixteen-and-a-half-foot (five-meter) extension of the platform to the north, made to accommodate the broader cela of the new temple; this was required because of the colossal statue of Athena Parthenos to be housed in its interior. The extension brought a small preexisting shrine, perhaps that of Athena Ergane, mentioned by Pausanias within the walls of the Classical Parthenon. The location and architectural components of the shrine were carefully maintained, its height raised, and the northern colonnade of the new temple designed so that the shrine fit comfortably within it. Thus, as the sanctuary was renewed and expanded, the old cults were maintained; the effort this entailed suggests the continued importance to the Athenians of the established sacred topography of the site.

The Parthenon also incorporated within its architectural form all the remaining blocks of its ruined predecessor; the only exceptions were those too damaged by thermal fracture to be useful, such as the column drums built into the citadel’s north wall. This, too, was a decision that had considerable implications for the design of the new building. The diameter of the column drums, for example, was critical in determining proportional relations throughout the temple. At the same time, the reused blocks had to be deployed very carefully, due to the refinements—the subtle departures from a monotonous, mathematically determined sameness—seen in both the Classical building and its predecessor. The Older Parthenon had already incorporated into its foundations the upward curvature, bowing toward the center of each side, that is so vivid and effective a feature of the Classical temple. Because of this feature, the blocks used to construct the Archaic building were not of uniform dimensions, but varied slightly depending on their placement within the temple, as they accommodated and extended the curvature seen in the foundations. Recycled for the Classical Parthenon, they had to be measured carefully, placed selectively, and in some cases reworked for new locations within the building.

As with the reused fragments in the citadel walls, so, too, the recycled materials deployed in the Parthenon have sometimes been explained in pragmatic, economic terms. It is
Certainly true that these precut, readily available blocks would have saved the Athenians money—estimated at about one-quarter of the construction budget for the temple—since quarrying and transport figured hugely in the cost of any stone building. But the reused blocks had a significance that went beyond the purely economic. As the Athenians constructed their new temple on the site of the Older Parthenon, using materials derived from it, they could imagine that the ruined sanctuary had been reborn, larger in scale, more elaborate in its sculptural decoration, but also physically connected to the past.

It is worth highlighting the difference between this reuse of architectural fragments and that seen earlier on the citadel walls. On the walls, the damaged materials stand out; they visually assert their separation from their surroundings and their connection to the past. The recycled fragments in the Parthenon, by contrast, are integrated into their architectural setting, often indistinguishable from new materials. The aim here was to create a unified impression, so that one saw the building as an organic whole, not as a collection of fragments. The memory of destruction was effaced—or, at any rate, covered over, in the manner of a palimpsest—with a new creation.

Yet the architectural ensemble does not tell the whole story. In the Parthenon, the memory of the Persian sack was preserved not so much through concrete reference to the historical past as symbolically, through myth. As noted above, the battles displayed in the metopes and on the Athena Parthenos statue are critical here. They connected the Persians with negative mythological exemplars such as the centaurs and Amazons, perhaps inspired by the Orientalist monuments discussed above, such as the Stoa Poikile. At the same time, by depicting defeated and dying Greeks, the images testified to the formidable qualities of the Greeks’ opponents and the high price paid to secure victory against them.

That price is figured very explicitly on the Parthenon’s metopes. South metope 28 depicts one of the scenes of battle between men and centaurs; on it, the centaur’s victory is clear (Fig. 3). The centaur dominates the metope, his body cutting a great diagonal swath across it, from his left arm, raised in a commanding gesture, to his triumphantly waving tail. Rearing on his hind legs, he is poised to come crashing down on the chest of his unfortunate victim. Even the animal skin he wears seems to have taken on his aggressive, victorious character, as its jaws and claws point directly down at the defeated enemy. By contrast, the centaur’s victim has no hope. While his knees (and once, perhaps, his arms also) are upward in a semblance of resistance, it can end only in futility. His body, crumpled on the ground, already has the appearance of a corpse.

This metope, with its clear and deliberate depiction of the man’s defeat, is by no means unique. Useful comparisons are metope 1 (where the man seems about to be lifted off the ground and strangled), metope 4 (where he is being bashed on the head by a wine jug), and metope 30 (where he is thrust down to the ground, flailing, with the centaur about to attack from above). Indeed, of the eighteen metopes with the theme of men fighting centaurs, fully a third of them display the men in mortal danger, and a number of others are equivocal. There are, of course, images where the men are successful, as in metope 27. But as an ensemble, the Parthenon south metopes highlight the price of victory, not its effortless achievement.

Nor are the south metopes unique; their emphasis on the price of victory is typical for the other contests depicted on the Parthenon. The west metopes, for example, present the battle between men and Amazons. They are poorly preserved, but through close analysis of the fragments and comparison with similar imagery on contemporary vase paintings, we can reconstruct them in part. About half the metopes appear to
have carried the image of a mounted Amazon attacking a fallen Greek soldier; this visual formula indicated that the Greek would die (Fig. 4). Here, then, even more than on the south side of the Parthenon, the battle was hard fought, and frequently the Amazons—mythological analogues for the Persians for at least a generation—were shown triumphant.

The other contests depicted on the Parthenon metopes are even harder to read; the scenes were hacked away by later occupants of the building, most likely early Christians. In the case of the gigantomachy (battle between gods and giants) on the east metopes, at least, we should probably imagine that scenes of failure were absent; the gods could not have been pictured losing. Nonetheless, the metopes' focus on defeat as well as victory is significant. And it was reiterated elsewhere on the Parthenon, most notably on a series of sculptures from the chryselephantine statue of Athena Parthenos.

The colossal statue of Athena has not been preserved; it was likely destroyed by a fire that struck the Parthenon in the third century CE. However, we know from replicas of it as well as literary accounts that the same mythological cycles seen on the metopes ornamented the statue; the centauromachy figured on Athena's sandals, the Amazonomachy on the exterior of her shield, and the battle between gods and giants on the interior of the shield. The Amazonomachy is particularly well documented, both in statuettes, such as the Patras Athena, and in a series of full-scale copies known as the Piraeus reliefs. What the copies make clear, through their depiction of a fortified citadel as the setting, is that we have here the Athenian Amazonomachy, that is, the Amazons' attack on the Athenian Acropolis after their leader, Hippolyta, was abducted by Theseus. The parallels with the Persian attack are highlighted, for instance, through scenes of the Amazons scaling the walls and bringing torches to set fire to the citadel, just as the Persians did. So, too, the fight is set within a rocky landscape, and the defeated, such as the figure known as the "death leap" Amazon, throw themselves down from the heights (Fig. 5, at lower right). This focus on the Acropolis setting for the battle is very unusual within the context of Classical Amazonomachies, and it did not emerge, at least in preserved monuments, prior to the building of the Parthenon. Its use here is significant; it serves to enhance the historical resonances of this exemplary myth, to make the connections clearer for contemporary viewers.

At the same time, the Athenians' use of myth, in the Parthenos Amazonomachy as elsewhere, had a number of advantages over the direct representation of contemporary events. To begin with, it gave the Persian Wars a heroic, even cosmological significance, recasting the historical events as part of a transcendental struggle between good and evil, civilization and barbarism. As the Athenians were pictured as heroes and the Persians beasts or women, the moral complexities of the events in question were smoothed away and their paradigmatic character heightened; they became easier, more comfortable, to remember. Similarly, the trauma of these events was lessened through the use of myth. While the battered korai had proved too painful to endure (too vivid a reminder, perhaps, of the sufferings of the actual Athenians killed in the sack), the defeat and death of Greeks was easier to accept when refracted through the lens of myth; this had a distancing effect for viewers. Finally, mythology offered the opportunity to, as it were, rewrite history, to memorialize initial defeats as the natural concomitant of eventual victory. After all, in the mythological battles depicted on the Parthenon, the Greeks always win; on the Acropolis in 480 BCE, the reality was otherwise. In this way, the mythological images that decorated the Parthenon can be understood as central to its commemorative purpose; as they retold history through myth, they served the selective process of memorializing and forgetting necessary to collective memory.

Looking back, we find that patterns of commemoration on the Athenian Acropolis seen just after the Persian sack differ radically from those found in the Periclean Parthenon. Responses to the sack in its immediate aftermath were grounded in the concrete historical circumstances of the event, commemorating it with ruins, relics, and the ritual burial of damaged sculptures. In the Parthenon, however, the history of the sack was, quite literally, fundamental to the building, as the temple made use of the footprint and architectural remains of its destroyed predecessor. But the Parthenon's relation to the past was at the same time obscured, as these elements were integrated into a new architectural creation, which appeared as an organic whole. In its sculptural decoration, this connection to the past was thoroughly transformed, as history was retold through myth.

These perceptions yield an enhanced understanding of the Parthenon and its relation to the past, as well as some illuminating broader implications concerning the role of the image in Greek society. Scholars have often interpreted monuments such as the Parthenon simply as sophisticated works of art, focusing on issues of connoisseurship (chronology, attribution, workshop style) or, more recently, semiotics. Although such scholarly approaches have added much to our insight of Greek art, they have at the same time tended to obscure some key aspects of it. In particular, they have subordinated its functional qualities to its aesthetic effect; in so doing, they have deprived Greek images of some of their affective power.

The balance can be redressed by focusing particularly on the functions of images and on emotive rather than aesthetic responses to them. As I have shown, objects such as the Acropolis korai were intended to evoke a powerful reaction from viewers—so powerful that they were burned and hacked to pieces, and then buried to hide the traces of such an attack. And monuments like the architectural fragments in the Acropolis north wall or, in later years, the Parthenon itself were not created simply to delight the eyes, and satisfy the pride, of their Athenian viewers. They were instead intended to memorialize collective experience and to shape the Athenians' memories of their traumatic, but ultimately victorious, past history. This powerful and, indeed, generative function for monuments is best expressed by Demosthenes, who once urged his Athenian audience, "Reflect, then, that your ancestors set up those trophies, not that you may gaze at them in wonder, but that you may also imitate the virtues of the men who set them up."

Rachel Kousser is an associate professor at Brooklyn College and member of the doctoral faculty at the CUNY Graduate Center, where
she teaches the history of Greek and Roman art. She is the author of Hellenistic and Roman Ideal Sculpture: The Allure of the Classical (Cambridge University Press, 2008) [Department of Art, Brooklyn College, 2900 Bedford Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11210, <kuossr@brooklyn.cuny.edu>].

Notes

This project has benefited from the generosity of many scholars and institutions. Thanks are due to Richard Powell, Marianne Warde, and the three anonymous readers of The Art Bulletin; to audiences at Columbia University, the University of Toronto, and the University of Cincinnati; to Andrew Stewart and Catherine Keeling for making their forthcoming work available to me; and to Andreas Geisler of the Forschungsarchiv für Antike Plastik, Cologne; Gary Lavelle of the Metropolitan Government of Nashville; Meghan Mazella of the British Museum; John Borren; Tricia Smith of Art Resource; J. M. Hurwit, the staff of the Acropolis Museum; Evelyn Harrison; and Natasha Vogelkoff-Brogan of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, for assistance with photographs. This project was made possible through the financial support of the dean of Graduate Studies, Brooklyn College, the New Faculty Fund, the Writing Foundation, and the PNC/CUNY Research Foundation. To Evelyn Harrison, who has taught me so much about the Parthenon, this article is lovingly dedicated.


5. For the ancient world, useful contributions have been made by Susan Alcock, Archetypes of the Greek Past: Landscape, Monuments, and Memory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Carla Antonacci, An Archology of Anxiety: Tomb Cult and Hero Cult in Early Greece (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1995); and Nicole Loriaux, Divided City: On Memory and Forgetting in Ancient Athens, trans. Corinne Pachc and Jeff Fort (New York: Zone Books, 2002). So far, however, archaeological approaches to the study of memory in Classical Athens have not been extensively explored.


9. Castriotta, Myth, Ethics, and Activity.

10. The Parthenon’s reputation as a timeless monument goes back to the ancient world itself; see Platarch, Perikles 13.1–5.


14. On the olivewood statue, see Pasarnias 1.268. For the Temple of Athena Polias, see William Childs, “A Date of the Old Temple of Athena on the Athenian Acropolis,” in The Archaeology of Athens and Attica under the Democracy, ed. William Coulson et al. (Oxford: Oxford Books, 1994), 34–46, as well as a date after the establishment of the democracy in 510 BCE and Manolis Korres, “Athenian Classical Architecture,” in Athens: From the Classical Period to the Roman Age, ed. Konstantinos Korres et al. (New Castle, Del.: Oak Knoll Press, 2006), 7, reiterating a date during the reign of the Peisistratids, about 525 BCE.


20. Katerina Karakasi, Archeion Koni, trans. J. Paul Getty Trust (Los AngelEs: Getty Publications, 2005), 115–41; Catherine M. Keesling, The Iconic Statues of the Muses by the Archaios (Athens: Artemis, 2003), 1–184; and Mary Stiecher, The Poetics of Appearance in the Attic Koinh (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004). The leaf from the Athenian Acropolis (Fig. 6) was found in a cistern near the Erechtheum at the Erechtheum.


2. For an overview of the range of dedications seen on the Acropolis, see Hurwit, *The Athenian Acropolis*, 57-61.

3. Cf. ibid., 88.

4. Ibid., 74-78.


6. Herodotus 7.143.


8. Herodotus 8.53.

9. Ibid.


12. On the Nike, see n. 21 above. On its possible identification as Iris, see Keeling, "The Kallimachos Monument."
It is clear that given the extraordinarily large amount of fill needed for terracing—some 13,000 cubic yards (10,000 cubic meters) for the north wall, and 52,000–59,000 cubic yards (40,000–45,000 cubic meters) for the south wall—much was brought up from the lower city (Stewart, "The Persian and Carthaginian Invasions," 389); we cannot, therefore, be certain as to whether the foundations were set up there. In my analysis, I have consequently focused on those monuments that can most plausibly be associated with the Acropolis, for example, the architectural fragments and statues such as the korai and the Nike of Kallinaichos. The Nike's base was found in situ, as well as one of some korai.

The Temple of Athena Polias is discussed below. Literary sources, the most detailed of which is Plutarch (Pericles 12-14), make clear that the temples were not rebuilt until the age of Pericles. We are fortunately in having dated inscriptions, most significantly, financial accounts of the building process, on which see n. 59 above. Finally, there is archaeological evidence from the excavations carried out on the Acropolis, although the most significant are from the late nineteenth century and imperfectly recorded. Nonetheless, they show clearly that the area around the Parthenon was retrenched in association with the construction of the temenos; this can be dated to the mid-fifth century B.C. by means of finds in the fill (Hurwit, "The Kritios Boy," 62–63). For the possible survival into the Early Classical period of part of the Temple of Athena Polias, see n. 78 below.


It is true that, due to Greek historiography, the first mention of the Erechtheum brought to its foundation the cult of the Erechtheus and inscriptions, and a hoard of Late Archaic coins. For the excavation, see Kavadias, "Anthropodai ev tei Akropoloi," Archaiologia Ephemeris, 1888, 75–82; Kavadias and Kawerau, Die Ausgrabung der Areopoli von Jahren 1895 bis Jahren 1899 (Athens: Ethisia, 1919), 24–32; and Stewart, "The Persian and Carthaginian Invasions," 381–85. On the coins, see Chester G. Starr, Athenian Coins, 480–449 B.C. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 4–7; and Stewart, 385–85. Additional information on the dating of the north wall comes from the study of its architectural construction (Korres, "On the North Acropolis Wall"). Some scholars have dated the construction of the north wall to the Kitionian period, somewhat after 678. 680–82, and the Nike. Acropolis Mus. ins. no. 690.

For the findspots of the sculptures, see Schrader, Die Archaischen Monumentalskulpturen der Akropolis.

For the external and the numismatic evidence, see n. 84 above. For the external, see n. 84 above. Findings from the coins included at least nine sculptures as well as five Archaic inscriptions, building materials, a column drum of the Temple of Athena Polias, and various statue bases, sherds, and axes. For the inscriptions, see Raubitschek, Deutungen aus den Athenischen Moneten, nos. 6, 13, 14, 197, 217

91. The statue is often referred to in the scholarly literature as the Athenian Prometheus. Since this title is attached only in one, very late source—a scholium to Demodoches' Against Antiphon (507.5)—I have avoided the name here. For the dating of the statue, see Evelyn Harrison, "Phidias," in Personal Styles in Greek Sculpture, ed. J. J. Pollitt and Olga Palagia, Yale Classical Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 16-55, esp. 30. Other useful discussions of the statue include Hurwit, The Athenian Acropolis, 151-52; and Carol Matthes, Classical Bronze: The Art and Craft of Greek and Roman Statuary (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1996), 125-28, for literary sources, we have descriptions in Pausanias (1.28) and Demodoches, De fabis legatis 19.272, and inscriptive evidence for the construction of the statue and its cost (IG 13, 345, lines 427-51). For a reconstruction and interpretation of the inscription, see B. Bimson, "Attic Building Accounts," pt. 4, The Statue of Athenai Prometheus, American Journal of Archaeology 92 (1988): 118-29.


93. Ibid., 153-55.

94. Pausanias 1.28.2; and Demodoches, De fabis legatis 19.272.

95. The only certain representations of it are on Roman-era Athenian coins, which depict, in abbreviated and schematic form, some of the major monuments on the Acropolis. Harrison, "Phidias," 32-34.

96. Dinsmoor, The Statue of Athenai Prometheus, 126.


99. For the dating of the monument, determined through pottery from its foundations, see ibid., 81.


101. The paintings were executed by some of the most famous artists of the Early Classical era. Polygnotos is said to have done the Trojan War scenes (Plutarch, Xim 8.5-6). Mikon, the Amazonomachie, Iliustria 677-79, while Marathon is variously ascribed to Polygnotos, Mikon, or a third candidate, Panamas, brother of Phidias. Aelian, De natura animantium 7.38 (Polygnotos or Mikon); Pausanias 5.11.6 (Panamas); Pliny, Natural History 35.57 (Panamas).

102. For possible reflections in later art, see Evelyn Harrison, "The South Frieze of the Nike Temple and the Marathon Painting in the Painted Stoa," American Journal of Archaeology 76 (1972): 353-78; the article also provides a useful catalog of the most relevant literary sources for the paintings, which should be supplemented by the more broad-ranging selection on the building in R. E. Wechter, Literary and Epigraphical Testimony, vol. 3, The Athenian Agora: Results of Excavations Conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens (Princeton: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1957), 31-45.

103. Pausanias 1.17.5-6; for other literary references to the Theatron, see Wechter, Literary and Epigraphical Testimony, 115-19; the shrine's decoration is discussed in Castriona, Myth, Ethnicity, and Activism, 53-63.

104. Polygnotos is mentioned in Harkopration (Wechter, Literary and Epigraphical Testimony, 114); and Mikon by Pausanias (1.17.5).


111. The fact that the Trojans were here depicted sympathetically, and elsewhere (as in the Stoa Poikile and Simonides) in a polemical and unsympathetic manner, is testimony to the malleability of myth in Classical Greek culture.


113. For committee oversight of expenditures relating to the Parthenon, see the financial accounts discussed in n. 59 above. As to the speed of building, Manolis Korres has calculated that with the stoneworking tools available today, and using the same number of masons and sculptors, construction on the Parthenon would take at least twice as long. Korres, From Pentelic to the Parthenon (Athens: Melissa Publishing House, 1995), 7.


115. Stewart, Classical Greece and the Birth of Western Art, 132-33.

116. Ibid., 133.


120. The recent reconstruction of the building history on the site of the Parthenon by Manolis Korres ("Die Athena-Tempel auf der Akropolis") includes not one but a series of predecessors: an "Ut-Parthenon" dating to the early to mid-fourth century, followed by two Late Archaic building phases, one in poros (a soft stone), the other marble. Most significant, however, is the marble predecessor dated to about 490 B.C.E. and destroyed by the Persians, our focus here.

121. Hurwit, The Athenian Acropolis, 166.

122. For the shrine, see especially Korres, "Die Athena-Tempel auf der Akropolis," 227, and for its identification with Athena Ergane, see Hurwit, The Acropolis in the Age of Pericles, 74-77; and Pausanias 1.24.3.

123. For analogous examples of this kind of "historic preservation," see Hurwit, "Landscape of Memory: The Presence of the Past on the Athenian Acropolis," chap. 2 of The Acropolis in the Age of Pericles, 40-86.


127. For the curvature of the Older Parthenon, see ibid., 119. It should be noted that, due to the extension of the podium and the different plans of the new building, the curvature had to be reworked, on which see Francis Cranmer Penrose, An Investigation of the Principles of Athenian Architecture (1888; Washington, D.C.: McGrath, 1973), 20-29.

128. I thank Francesco Benelli for pointing out the challenges involved in this to me. On the reuse of materials, see Korres, From Pentelic to the Parthenon, 56, Bundgaard, Parthenon and the Mycenaean City, 61-67, discusses reused material from the Older Parthenon, although his conclusion—that the entire building was essentially taken apart, altered very minimally, and put together again—cannot stand in light of more recent discoveries, on which see especially Korres, Recent Discoveries on the Acropolis.

130. As argued by, for example, Hurwit, *The Acropolis in the Age of Pericles*, 72-76.


136. The Athenian Amazonomachy is described in Aeschylus (*Eumenides* 688); Plutarch (*Theseus* 26-27), and Pausanias (1.21.1). For the argument in favor of the Athenian Amazonomachy, see especially Harrison, "Motifs of the City-Siege."


139. On collective memory, see n. 4 above.
