APPROPRIATE NARRATIVES

Archaeologists, Publics and Stories



Edited by

Elisabeth Niklasson and Thomas Meier

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ELISABETH NIKLASSON and THOMAS MEIER

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Hidden narrative in the vicinity of the Berber village Imouzzer in Morocco
(Photo Elisabeth Niklasson)

Back Cover Illustration
Greek flag-design used during the Revolutionary War,
in a gun-slit of the *Kastro Favierou, Methana, Greece.*
(Photo Linos Papachristou)

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The Acropolis of Athens as imaginary neighbour in the local 'homeland'

STELLA KATSAROU-TZEVELEKI

Abstract:
The Acropolis, a national and global symbol constituted through mutual colonial engagements with western modernity, in addition to its non-reflexive image of immortality, also bears hidden faces behind its solidified austerity. Faces like those generated within the range of contingent individual discourses occurring between the monument and the society of permanent residents in the area around the Sacred Rock. Amongst these residents, the pupils of the very local Primary School have subscribed their personal appropriations of the monument to the official claim of the Greek state for the return of the Parthenon marbles to Athens. They have done so by particularising their argument based on their personal trauma, suffered from the exile of the violently dismembered ancient properties out of their native land. In the course of a locally initiated project, run outside of the state's official campaign, their claim has been propagated by an anthology of artworks, citing imaginary versions of the schoolchildren's memories. The images show the presences and absences of the ancient sculptures from their neighbourhood, advocated as the very powerful homeland. The present paper discusses the project by stressing its indigenous voice upon the long lived dream of antiquity residing at the core of Hellenic nationhood, and the response of these accounts to post-modern multiple contexts.

The 'young neighbours of the Acropolis' project

Konstantinos on top of a marble horse from the Parthenon frieze is riding over the hills in front of the Acropolis. At the playground the 'mourning goddess Athena' is looking at Nefeli who's cuddling a Caryatid, and further behind her another Caryatid is sitting on a swing.

These are two out of the 82 images created by the Acropolis' schoolchildren, stating their imaginary and metaphysic biographies with the monument's sculptures, narrated to respond to a locally managed project. The project aims to promote the bring-them-back appeal for the Parthenon marbles as essential to the children's constant embodied appropriation of the monumental artefacts,

as well as their emotional bondedness with the sculpted images. As pupils of the 70th Primary School of Athens, built at the foot of the Acropolis hill to its south and across the street on the west side of the new Acropolis Museum, these children have indeed been spending their schooldays in a constant visual dialogue with the pinnacle of Greece's emblematic past. The appearance of the Acropolis rock, and in particular of the Parthenon, dominates the view from the school courtyard (*Fig. 1*). The penetrating view that one can have from the year 5 and 6 classrooms, through the glass gallery of the Museum and over the temple's frieze and metopes – displayed in a fragmentary sequence with intermediate casts to recall for the missing pieces – constitute a terrain of powerful interactions for these children to improve contemporary appropriations of the ancient past as a reflection to its dismemberment.

The official Greek claim for the restitution of the Parthenon marbles to Athens from the British Museum, where they are exhibited after Lord Elgin had them violently removed from the monument in the early years of the 19th c. (St. Clair 1983), has already had a long history so far (Korka 2002; Hamilakis 2007: 243–286; Hitchens 2008). However, it has been particularly revived after the establishment of the new Acropolis Museum (Bernard Tschumi Architects



Fig. 1. Dominating view of the Parthenon and the Rock from the school's playground.

2009), emerging fast as another contemporary solidified landmark of western modernity. Further information on this history exceeds the scope of the present paper and can be easily researched in the vast literature and the worldwide web.

The project discussed here was launched in 2010 on the absolute initiative of the Acropolis School Parents Association, with the aim to contribute to the national claim by advocating an approach that would be focusing more on the privileged identities of the claimers as 'children' and 'neighbours' to the missing sculptures, rather than national citizens and generic heirs of a worldwide glorious cultural property. The project actually invited the Acropolis schoolchildren to narrate through visual artwork, their strong embodied and sensuous immediacy with the sculptures as their personal claim for the reconstitution of their dismembered neighbourhood. It also developed a plan to spread this claim to a worldwide audience with the publication of a multilingual anthology of the children's art. It is important to note that among the diverse formats the Greek campaign for the restitution of the Parthenon marbles had taken so far, this was the first time that the agenda involved children and locals, both sides engaged in the very same project. For those readers who are not acquainted with the degree the repatriation issue of the Parthenon sculptures is nationalised within the Greek context, in transcendence of any political and social divides, I should particularly emphasise that the involvement of children in this project is far from manipulating a politicised engagement or certain social grouping; for example, several non-Greek pupils of the school did equally share participatory enthusiasm and background ideals with children of Greek origin.

To be briefly informative on how the task developed, in the winter-spring of 2010 the Acropolis' schoolchildren were asked to join a series of art workshops held at the school beyond main class hours. The sessions were run under the guidance of instructors invited from the Museum of Greek Children's Art in Athens, a pioneering institution which is among a few of this kind worldwide, and is particularly specialized on teaching art history to young children, as well as on collecting and exhibiting children's art. The 82 kids from the school who responded to the invitation of the Parents Association were within the age range of 7 to 13. Before starting to make their own artworks, they had first followed a brief overview on the basic history of the Acropolis and the Parthenon, as well as the events concerning the removal of the sculptures. After this they were invited to compose their personal version of painted art, collage or combined technique within the general framework of the story about the marbles' presence, absence or return.

The project soon culminated and reached its partial fulfilment the same year, with the publication of the album anthology containing all artworks, under the title '*Our Sculptures Have their Homeland*' (KATSAROU-TZEVELEKI 2010), which was edited and published by the Parents Association with the raise of private funds. To further stress the primary axioms of the project, as local schoolchildren's privileged personal concern, authorship was ascribed to themselves under the definition of '*The young neighbours of the Acropolis*', featured above the title on the album's front cover (*Fig. 2*). The argument for their constantly experienced personal pain, due to the fragmented history, is however particularly strengthened by the powerful written appeal of the children – included in the form of a personal letter – cited before the artwork section to address their particular audience of worldwide friends of the same age. The letter was assembled from phrases and discourses spoken between the pupils during the painting sessions.

As the album from the beginning was planned to achieve the immediate attention of the international audience, this letter was repeated in 27 different languages, including most of the European, South-eastern and West Asian

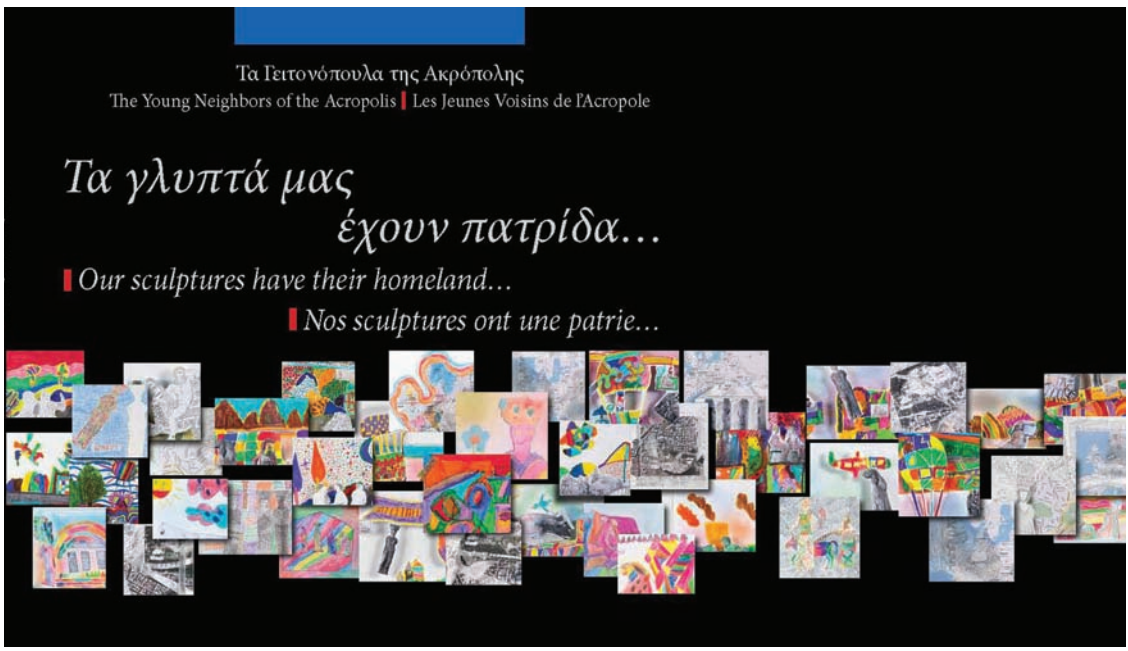
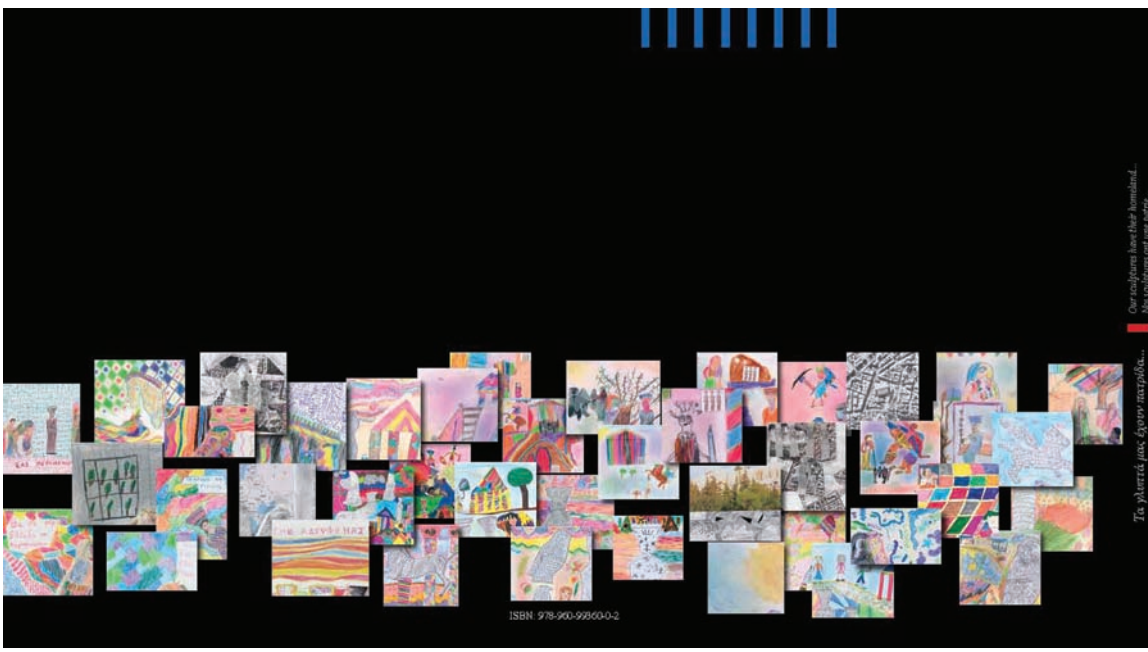


Fig. 2. 'Our Sculptures Have their Homeland', *2010, book cover.*

languages, such as Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indian, Arabic and Turkish. The strategic aim was to speak to the very heart of most of the people on the globe; all other complementary texts and captions of the book are in Greek, English and French. It is important to note that most of the translations were effectuated by the embassies of the relevant countries in Greece, some of them actually appointing the Greek debate for the Parthenon marbles with significant support from the side of the cultural heritage politics.

Publicity and further communication of the anthology has been an on-going aim of the project, in order to achieve a considerable contribution to the official campaign. The original artworks were displayed at a temporary exhibition at the Archaeological Museum of Delphi, Greece, during the spring of 2011. The album has so far been distributed to the press and to national and international agents, officials, academic scholars, and institutions, including the Swiss and the British local committees for the restitution of the Parthenon marbles; the latter actually welcomed the initiative with a one-page coverage in the winter 2012 issue of the campaign's online newsletter (KOUTSIKOU 2012). In Greece, the



album has been adopted, so far informally, by the state's current official advisory Committee established to promote the repatriation case. It has also received a very enthusiastic and touching response by Mr Spyros Mercouris, brother of the outstanding Greek myth personality Melina Mercouri who have passionately advocated the reunification issue as a Minister of Culture in the '80s, and whose giant pictures in front of the Parthenon are featuring as a commemoration to her and the nation's dream inside the 'Acropolis' Metro station in Athens.

Immediately below I will explore the dream narrative performances of the Acropolis schoolchildren as a foreground which has subconsciously revisited key conceptual trends on the constitutive role of the past in the ontology of the Hellenic nationhood. Later on I will attempt to situate these appropriations within the dense old on-going discussion on the evaluation of the antiquity's resourcefulness on a societal and epistemological level.

Enacted sculptures

The pupils' art has been materialised in six different thematic groups dealing with diverse versions of the appropriated presence or absence of the sculptures by the 'young neighbours'.

1.
In the first such group, the local kids and the antiquities appear as part of the same company of friends, the latter 'descending' from their temples to the pedestrian ways around Acropolis in order to play hide-and-seek and tag with the children; they are rocking on the swings at the school, are closed in the affectionate kids' embrace, they huddle up with the kids in a circle, carry them piggy back and are riding over the hills, or fly together with the children over the neighbourhood (*Fig. 3a, b*):

The young girl carrying a stool from the Panathenaic procession is looking at Adrianos who is running round and round. Stamatina is running amongst the Parthenon figures and the Caryatids who are looking at her. Sergios and Konstantinos are playing in the midst of the galloping horses from the Parthenon frieze. Areti is climbing on top of the Archaic colossal owl. The 'mourning Athena' and a horse-rider from the frieze are looking at Sotiris who is playing with his friends. Christina-Gavriela and goddess Athena from the pediment of Gigantomachy are playing at the slide and the swings at the school. Christos is

firing a bow and arrow to goddess Athena who is hiding behind an olive tree, while the Caryatids are looking at him from further away. Spyros is lying on his back on a galloping horse that has sprung out of the Panathenaic procession of the Parthenon.

2.

In the second group, some of the personified sculptures are only basically sketched in pencil to denote that they live in exile. The convention – most likely suggested from the instructors, although some initiative from the part of the kids seems to have occurred in certain works – is visually inventive in terms of both style and symbolism: the grey and shadowy absences onto the contrastingly colourful hills and streets of the neighbourhood would depict the shape of the real sculptures rather than show a generic emptiness. The pertinence to the physicality, visibility and intransparency of the absent monuments in the imagery, should be exceptionally noted here as they signify constant sensuous perceptions in the children's memories. This surreal depiction is in a way alluding to the Platonic interpretation of visible things as ghosts or reflections of an ideal sphere (although probably the pupils did not consciously realise it as such), which here is meant to denote the ancient past and homeland cosmology, projecting memories onto the present life of the kids. More than that, the shadowy colour is additionally indicative of the children's sorrow towards these absences (*Fig. 4a, b*).

Vasiliki watches the shadow of a huge amphora that is missing from its stand at the park right outside the temple, and the grey sketch of a gigantic Pegasus that flies in front of a rainbow. Maria perceives the reflection of absent 'mourning goddess Athena' next to the temple and the shadow of a horse missing from the Parthenon frieze, galloping towards her. Chrysa, Sofia-Eleni, Stella and Aikaterina depict the reflections of the Caryatids and the Parthenon horses that are galloping under the hill. Zoi observes the reflections of the absent monuments on the pediment of the temple; Alexandra, Chara and Anastasia recognize the shadows of the absent columns and the cornice on the actual ancient ruins, while Orestis does see the reflection of an entire row of the missing Caryatids at its very original place at the temple of Erechtheion. Theodora, Margarita and Giasemi also depict the Caryatids, the 'mourning Athena', the colossal owl, and goddess Athena from the Gigantomachy as grey outline figures of absence still strolling around inside the colourful landscape.



Fig. 3a. Konstantinos Barkas, age 8, riding on the frieze's horse over the Acropolis.

3.

In the third group, transcending their physical limits, we watch the 'young neighbours' as they take the decisive initiative to bring these uprooted monuments back themselves. Contrary to the previous depictions of the absent sculptures as reflections, here the statues appear 'in person' – intentionally designated as a collage of photographs, so as to be illustrated realistically and vividly (*Fig. 5a, b*). Almost all images include the head of the horse from the Parthenon's east pediment:

Argyro and Dimitris position the Caryatids from Erechtheion and the chariot driver from the Parthenon frieze upright on top of train carriages. Natassa is



Fig. 3b. Areti Xenikaki, age 9, playing with the colossal owl and the Caryatids.

loading up the colossal owl on to a truck, Anastasia transports the enthroned gods Zeus and Hera from the Parthenon frieze and the horse from the east pediment by boat. Fanis however ties the same horse behind a wheeled vehicle together with the 'mourning Athena' and the young girl that carries the stool from the Panathenaic procession. Ioannis has loaded an enthroned god and the head of the horse from the east pediment on the same carriage, together with one Caryatid in upright position, while another Caryatid is hanging from a balloon. Artemis hangs a Caryatid from an airplane, while Athina suspends her same statue from another hot-air balloon together with the Parthenon's horse and the riders. Fotis has placed the horse in the hot-air balloon basket, but drags Athena from the Gigantomachy, wrapped in chains, lying down in the air. Panagiotis suspends



Fig. 4a. Zoi Domvrou-Ryan, age 7.

from the airplane one Caryatid as well as a slab from the Parthenon frieze and the statue of Athena Parthenos. Minoas has the Parthenon's man and the boy that unfold Athena's peplos on roller blades, and hangs the horse-riders from a hot-air balloon. Maria has put the enthroned and standing Parthenon frieze figures on top of train wagons. Finally Stefania manages to balance the horse from the

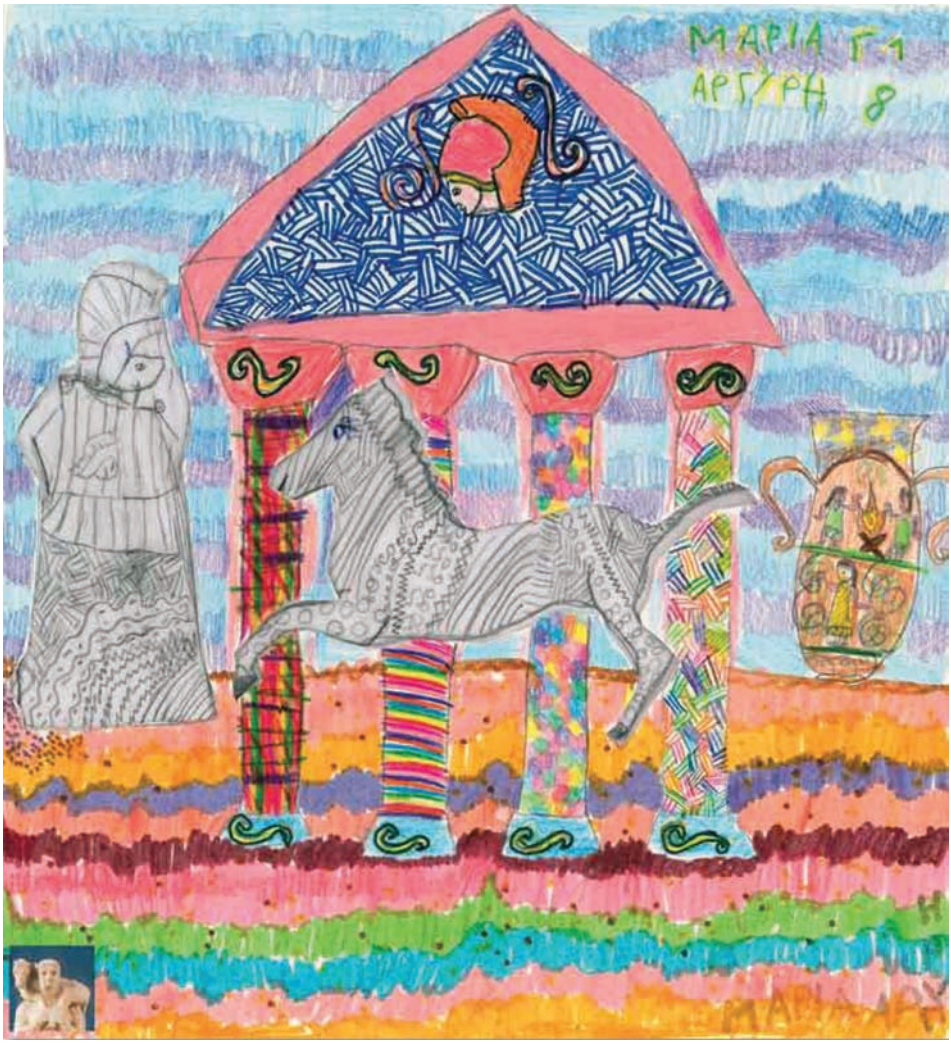


Fig. 4b. Maria Argyri, age 8, sketched pediment and statues denoting the absent antiquities.

pediment on a bicycle, and places the Caryatid upright and another head of a horse inside a van.



Fig. 5a. Fotis Kallivretakis, age 9, dragging by hands the Archaic statue of goddess Athena and hanging the Parthenon's east pediment horse from a hot-air balloon.

4.

We are not simply shown the sculptures moving in the artworks, but we are also capable to 'hear' their 'voices'. In the fourth group the canvas has become the field for a metaphysical dialogue taking place between the uprooted statues and those exhibited in Greece or the 'young neighbours'. The messages are mostly exchanged between the Caryatids expressing mutual pain for being forcefully separated, as well as their longing for return and the reassurance that they are now eagerly awaited by the children (*Fig. 6a, b*) (KOUTSIKOU 2012: Fig. 2). These dialogues directly refer to old local Athenian legends claiming that the spirit of the sculptures was upset from their violent dismembering, and that in the evenings the Caryatids left behind were heard crying for their lost 'sister' removed by Elgin (see references cited in HAMILAKIS 2007: 250).



Fig. 5b. Stefania Evangelisti, age 7, loading the horse on a bike and one Caryatid upright on a van.

'We want you to come back!!!' say the 'mourning Athena' and the colossal owl to the Caryatid in Anna-Maria's painting. Chara's owl is reassuring the Caryatid: 'Everyone is waiting for you!'. Dimitra imagines what the uprooted Caryatids are saying to their 'sisters' in Athens: 'We want to come back', and they are replying: 'We are waiting for you'. The Caryatids in Alexandros' painting wonder as they gaze upon the empty outline of the one who is missing: 'Where is our sister?'. Artemis proudly promises to the Caryatid: 'I will bring you to Greece so that everyone may admire you!'. Eleftheria is speaking vividly to the chariot-driver from the Panathenaic procession: 'We are looking forward to your return!'. Angelos reassures the horse from the Parthenon's east pediment: 'Everyone is waiting for you!'. And Chrysi has the galloping horse of the north frieze wondering: 'Where is my rider?'. In David's work the existing enthroned goddess Hera from the Parthenon frieze is speaking to her shadowy reflection: 'Come back, wherever you are'.



Fig. 6a. Dimitra Valadaki, age 11, (above) the sculptures saying: '- We want to come back*'; (below) the Caryatids replying: '*- We are waiting for you*'.*

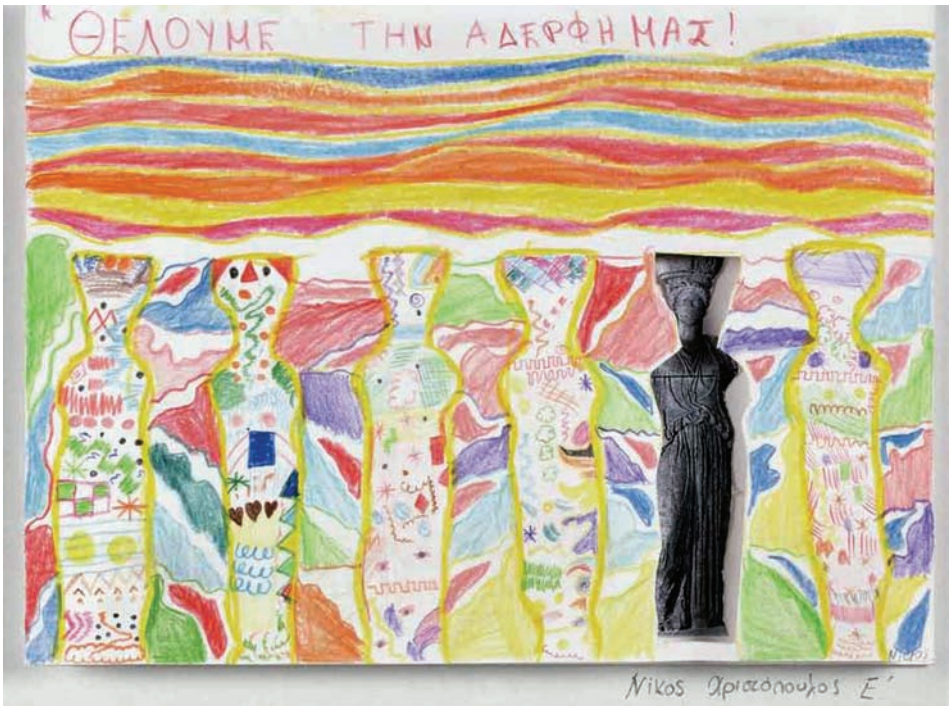


Fig. 6b. Nikos Christopoulos, age 10, (the Caryatids saying) '- We want our sister!'

In this group of works, the repatriation of the sculptures is transformed into a metaphysical achievement from the part of the 'young neighbours' who are capable of bringing the ancient artefacts back upon their immediate interaction, excluding any state negotiations and permits. Nowhere does the imagery make any reference to museum space. It is only in two artworks that an indirect reference to the establishment of the Acropolis Museum is made; one such dialogue raises the old argument of the British side that the monuments, upon their restitution in Athens, would face severe danger in regards to preservation, confronted with its reversed update now posed by the establishment of the new Acropolis Museum:

Marizoi pleads with the Caryatid: 'Come back. Your place awaits you. Don't be afraid, you won't fall to ruin. Your sisters are waiting for you and crying. Come back as quickly as you can. Everyone awaits you'. Stella also shows the young girls that hold the stools in the north frieze of the Parthenon as being impatient: 'We want to return to our new home'.

The messages themselves are concise and minimalist and transfer power directly from the artwork to the soul of the viewer. The pinnacle is found in Eleni-Anna's work where the Caryatid, contrasted once more against a minimalist background, is dashing forward – as suggested by her leaning body – in order to take her place at the empty outline of her shape that awaits her (KOUTSIKOU 2012: Fig. 1): *'I'm already on my way!'*

5.
In the fifth group, the sculptures are transported back to Athens through an imaginary, dream-like journey, imbued with the enthusiasm of friends that are about to join a long desired homeland. The journey is depicted as a transverse on the map of Europe, landing on the map of the neighbourhood around the Acropolis (Fig. 7):

For Margarita and Marvinia the Caryatid and the horse from the frieze reach the Acropolis and the Museum flying over Europe. Emmanouil depicts the statue of goddess Athena and the horse from the Parthenon pediment watching Europe from above on their return. For Anastasia Athena of the Gigantomachy is crossing Europe on her way back, while for Fay it is the 'mourning Athena' that journeys back on the map. Tzouliano imagines the entire row of the Caryatids crossing the map from the northern Europe to the Mediterranean. Christina-Foteini watches the front row of the Caryatids and the enthroned deities of the frieze landing in the neighbourhood. Evita and Giorgos envision the Caryatid and the colossal owl arriving mid air on the map of the Acropolis region. Alexandros also depicts on the same map two Caryatids, Eleonora six, Foivi shows the standing figures from the Parthenon east frieze and Elina a horse from the Panathenaic procession that comes back galloping.

6.
However, before they can take their final positions in their new home, either as old friends welcomed back by their companions or eagerly awaiting new neighbours, the sculptures first take a stroll in the neighbourhood, around the hills and the parks nearby the Sacred Rock.



Fig. 7: Fay Vlami, age 10, the Parthenon's east pediment horse and the 'mourning Athena' fly over Europe to Greece.

Michalis and Dimitris depict the enthroned gods of the Parthenon frieze already arrived under the hill of the Acropolis. Theodora's standing elders of the frieze have descended in the park of the Rock. Martha's young girls holding the stools in the Panathenaic procession, together with the seated gods Athena and Hephaestus are walking around the neighbourhood. Konstantinos imagines the small pony and the horse riders of the Parthenon frieze galloping on the pedestrian way, while Odysseas has put one slab from the frieze that has just arrived, straight outside the entrance of the new Acropolis Museum.

Transformed marbles

Transcending the physical boundaries of space and time, the 'young neighbours of the Acropolis' transformed the emblematic sculptures from the nearby monument into persons-protagonists of their contemporary life, where the ancient past is fully appropriated and assimilated. Their main companions are the Caryatids from the Erechtheion, horses, horse- and chariot-riders, enthroned gods and standing figures from the Parthenon frieze (Hurwit 2000; Neils 2005). Featured are also the emblematic head of the horse from the Parthenon east pediment, together with the popular statue of goddess Athena from the pediment of the Gigantomachy originating from an Archaic temple on the Rock, the colossal marble owl of the same date, along with the beloved Classical relief of 'mourning goddess Athena' (Acrop. Museum, Athens, nos 681, 1347, 695). Some images of sculptures that do not originate from the hill are also adopted for their symbolic significance, such as the Roman statuette of Athena Parthenos (Nat. Arch. Museum, Athens, no 129), and a few other than sculptural antique elements, including Pegasus and ceramic amphorae.

The transformations were based on a particular iconographic style which the 'young neighbours' had been guided to create as an idiom of embodied imagery, where the ancient monuments were visually multiplied, enlarged or reduced, coloured and figured to look like dream images. They are situated in space like enacted beings, but without changing their physical sculptural form: e.g. even though the 'mourning Athena' and the Caryatids are supposed to be moving, they do not appear marching or with arms outstretched, do not turn their heads or have visible expressions on their faces. Instead they simply stand rigid and upright facing the viewer – apart from one exception where one Caryatid is laughing and another one is sitting on a swing. Similarly, Athena from the Gigantomachy, whatever she is depicted doing in the images, she is always closely adhering to the standing position of the real statue, which is with one arm outstretched and her robes hanging over it. The Archaic giant owl could have been portrayed as flying in the sky, yet it appears stiff and with its wings closed as is the ancient figure. Particularly in the case of the 'mourning Athena', the expression of sadness or thoughtfulness of her bent head, which contributes further to the dramatic personification of the figure in the painful story of the exiled sculptures, is standardised in the children's imagery. For the same reason, the figures from the Parthenon frieze are portrayed as separate individuals, or in pairs, in order to

acquire an independent existence as persons in the children's narrations rather than be part of the ancient iconographic scenes.

A basic aspect of the surreal iconography of the 'young neighbours' is that it transcends the epistemological data that relate to Greece's request for the return of the Parthenon marbles, and that it restructures them in a new symbolic and metaphysic version. The choice of monuments enacted by the children does not appear to be determined by the official record of the monuments that have been detached from Acropolis to be exhibited abroad, neither does it correspond to the official list of monuments requested to be returned. It is absolutely expected that the 'young neighbours' freely shape their own version of absent sculptures in their artworks, perhaps choosing more among the most expressive figurative forms from the Acropolis (e.g. the 'mourning Athena') or the most popular (e.g. the Caryatids), rather than being concerned with following closely the accurate record of artefacts catalogued for reconstitution. In reality only one Caryatid is missing from Greece, the rest of them are in fact being exhibited at the Acropolis Museum, and not several as the children imagine in many of the their artworks, perhaps in their attempt to emphasise the gap left behind by the missing marbles. Moreover, the relief of the 'mourning Athena', the statue of Athena from the Gigantomachy and the colossal owl, which are here depicted as missing from Greece, are actually exhibited in the Acropolis Museum, while the Roman statuette of Athena Parthenos is also located at the National Archaeological Museum of Athens.

Therefore, in this iconographic narrative the emblematic figures of the past are reconstituted beyond any fastidious epistemological classifications and monolithic symbolisms to create a personal and participatory past for the 'young neighbours'; an eternal national grandeur that is appropriated through embodied action and contingency, and is absolutely lived in the *present*. But what is indeed the precise intrinsic essence of this memorialised base of Greek thought, which is being reconsidered and transformed here, and what are the avenues these background ideologies have travelled to reach the contemporary biographies of the Acropolis schoolchildren?

Emblematic past

Greek antiquity has repeatedly been discussed for the way it has come to represent the inherent resource of Hellenism, sometimes through a re-evaluation of its roots in the modernist paradigm, and often as a reproach for the lack

of perspective with regards to the *future* of this ancient past. For the modern Greek nation, the common conclusion however remains, that the reception of this resourceful Classical heritage, either from a social or an epistemological aspect, has empowered a central ideology of a dream nationhood, imagined as 'secular cosmology' in Herzfeld's words (Herzfeld 1987: 28). According to him, this dream nation has to remain untouched, timeless and authentic, because it physically guarantees the exclusivity and longevity of Greek-ness (Herzfeld 1987; 2005). This is a theoretical construct which in many ways is not entirely indigenous, but is actually based on ideological frameworks situated within the contexts of western modernity. As such they have first transformed Greece's original Classical past to a myth of western ontology, and have then reintroduced it to Greece as a colonial hybrid. Under the pretence of the unique morphological exceptionality of Greek history and Classical antiquity, this ideological construct of awareness – incorporating trends of romanticism and idealism that were simultaneously being shaped in European thought – managed to generate Greece's core ideology and self-definition in modernity (Hamilakis – Yalouri 1996; Kotsakis 1998: 48; Hamilakis 2007; Loukaki 2008: 15). The extent to which this concept still remains powerful today is eloquently demonstrated in the country's political strategies, education, and its various official representations (Plantzos 2011; 2012a; 2012b; see also papers in Brown – Hamilakis 2003 and in Damaskos – Plantzos 2008).

The symbol *par excellence* of this subjective grandeur is the Acropolis and particularly the Parthenon, which carry the weight of the present's promise to the Greek nation, to protect this unbroken existential relationship through time – by virtue of history and a sense of continuity – the glorious past, the present and the future of Greece. It is not surprising therefore, that the Acropolis, being an eternal stereotype at the top of the national stakes (Yalouri 2001: 49; 2010: 131; Loukaki 2008: 43), holds a prominent position that allows no negotiation and interaction with contemporary contexts. On the contrary, it is an emblem that seeks only enraptured observers and proud inheritors of a glorious past from within it, placed outside any dialogue that would risk it is exposed to any redefinition. This non-negotiable authority of the past that the Acropolis represents, is enforced by the official political agenda of the Greek state on its constant propagation and further reconfirmation of the illusionary national ontology: consequently the new Acropolis Museum has been inaugurated at the foot of the Sacred Rock in 2009 as an 'ark' of this national proof (Plantzos 2011), or the 'temple' of the

nation (HAMILAKIS 2007), while the official national claim for the return of the Parthenon marbles from the British Museum follows the same theoretical line.

So it is under the weight of these undying, unilateral concepts that the Caryatids together with the most famous Parthenon's sculpted figures are invited to enter the field of the present by the 'young neighbours of the Acropolis'.

Embodied ideals

Despite this suffocating framework that surrounds the ancient past, as a solidified truth beyond any redefinition, the 'young neighbours' showed through their intervention that its rupture takes place from within and from the bottom to the top. As Hamilakis has put it: "The materiality of the nation is not only a state affair, but is simultaneously constructed from below and from above. The topos of the nation is constantly produced" (HAMILAKIS 2007: 17). Through the reframing of the traditional monumental emblems in their drawings, the pupils demonstrate that in parallel with this culturally appropriated landscape exists a world in which Classical antiquity can become, contrary to appearances, a point of common discourse between different poles within a structure of collective and individual negotiation. The Acropolis is indeed transformed from a universal and national stereotype to a dynamic terrain open to possible recontextualisations, which exist under or beyond its official status and participate in its palimpsest:

> "All members of the national body are potentially involved in the same way as the management of its ideological referents and principles is not only a constantly contested affair but it is open to all" (HAMILAKIS 2007: 18).

The 'young neighbours' have produced this rather multiple and cosmopolitan Acropolis out of the monologic ancient substance, imbuing it with subjective, dependent, questionable and indisputable properties.

The allegories of *space* and its *embodiment* within the schoolchildren's personal biographies and ethnographies, not naturalized in the sense of the real world, but rather qualified with a perspective of *idealism*, represent to my mind the main axes transcending the pupils' artworks.

The concept of space in the paintings should not simply be regarded as natural topographical depictions of the Acropolis and its environs, including open spaces, hills, swings, the Rock and the temples, the plants and the sky. It carries instead a

strong social significance ascribed by the children's contemporary activity in the area, which is further added to the historical metaphors created for this locale by its ancient monumentality. This ethnographic aspect makes direct reference to a tangible, dynamic society of neighbours that consists of the families of the local residents living in the area south of the Acropolis under the domination of the Sacred Rock and the Museum, to which the particular social group of childhood friends and fellow pupils with the Primary School belong, having the pedestrian way and playground at the immediacy of the archaeological site as their main fields of activity.

Only to give a hint of the heavy load of glorious impetus that makes up the meaningful and powerful background of these children's ethnographies, I indicatively mention here as ordinary appropriations the key spots of the ancient topography, such as: the Roman Odeon (now Theatre) on the south slope of the Acropolis where Herodes Atticus held high art festivals for about 60 years, the early ancient theatre of Dionysus on the same side, the Athenian democracy's major landmarks at the hills of Pnyx hosting the ancient city's popular assemblies, and the Areios Pagos for the Court of Appeal. The newly constructed pedestrian zone, unifying the Acropolis and its environs with the Athenian Ancient Agora on the north slope and the Kerameikos cemetery further north west, as well as the Hadrian's Gate and the colossal temple of Zeus on the opposite side of the Rock, are high spot for locals and tourists expanding one's unmediated contact with the dominating landmarks. The bust of Melina Mercouri, at the start of the route to the Acropolis, and her commemorating giant pictures taken in front of the Parthenon that have been illustrating the 'Acropolis' Metro station, are another constant incentive for the 'young neighbours' to build renegotiable and reconstituting contemporary biographies of the ancient past. Finally, the new Acropolis Museum, recently established at the foot of the rock, is an outstanding example of modernity, essentially minimal and authoritative, heavily achromous and dogmatic. Although, in a way it can be seen as attempting to assimilate the transformative processes of the 20th c. to achieve some immediacy with the viewer.

The group of children frequenting these emblematic landmarks is socially diverse, as it encompasses several different social groups, for example, from different nationalities or financial standing. The group is not exclusionary, at least at the level of its self-definition, which is to form friendships and play together in the neighbourhood, a fusion that is further demonstrated in the inclusion of many 'young neighbours' of non-Greek nationality in the local-managed artwork

project. In fact the glory of the dream nation has been very appealing for several immigrants to share Hellenism and thus update their cultural status within the Greek society.

The immersion of the Acropolis within a multitude of social groupings holds a prominent place in the anthropological discussion of the monument (YALOURI 2001: 101; LOUKAKI 2008: 15), however they mostly reference a national, urban or other special level such as, for example, the tourists visiting the site. In fact the social framing of the monument within the community of local kids, and particularly playfellows who attribute to the emblematic site their very local and very personal understandings, is for the first time recorded in the collection of these artworks by the 'young neighbours of the Acropolis' discussed here. In this particular visual ethnography, the illustrated monuments exist as embedded with the schoolchildren in the locale, and as absolutely sensuously embodied by the kids, so as to constitute a desired *homeland* that would constantly verify the enduring continuity of the ancestry of Hellenism. Such a homeland has been discussed by GOURGOURIS (1996: 42) and HAMILAKIS (2007: 16), who has reassigned the Foucauldian metaphor of *heterotopia* to signify the imaginary topos that expands beyond any spatial dimension of the ancient land, to include all the possible figures and symbolic materialisations that would denote the ideal values of Hellenism. The exiled Parthenon sculptures potentially conceptualise such a mythical heterotopic homeland of the nation, invested with the desire for return.

But in the neighbours' artworks it is not only such a generic national framework that is recalled, but, more than that, it is the particular ethnography of this very local neighbourhood and its most privileged connection to the embodied cultural property that employ the imagery of the sculptures as the heterotopic homeland. It is the local ideal of the ancestral space that is narrated here, generated from the embodied experience with its heterotopias (HAMILAKIS 2007: 18), achieved through the bodily senses and emotional contact in the course of the ordinary daily practices and routines of the children.

Embodiment is a key concept of this project. It transfers the longue durée, based on an individual experiential view of randomness and contingency, to interaction on the small scale, responding to contemporary disciplinary trends of cultural anthropology (HAMILAKIS 2002). It was in fact already in the 19th century that empiricism and romantic neo-humanism improved the antiquity's corporeal dimensions within the dominant ideological construct of German

classicism (MARCHAND 1996: 7), by reprocessing older experiences of embodied appropriations of the past, deriving from long before modernity (HAMILAKIS 2011). The Acropolis Rock and the Parthenon are loved, as well as admired, awed or even feared, and invested with metaphysical powers in the local legends (PHILIPPIDES 1994). They are dreamt as ideals and morals (GOURGOURIS 1996: 29), sanitized and deified (ALONSO 1988; LEONTIS 1995; HAMILAKIS – YALOURI 1996; 1999; YALOURI 2001: 137), as clearly shown in the expression 'Sacred Rock' for the hill of the Acropolis.

The Acropolis pupils' imagery draws direct references from older stereotyped idyllic images of this 'pilgrimage' to the Rock and its environs painted by the 16th and 19th century travellers. In these paintings the shepherds, who herd their stock near the Acropolis, are depicted as an organic part of the ancient monumental landscape (MARCHAND 1996: 24; GOURGOURIS 1996: 196), and are by extension dreamed to be privileged people in history, thereby generating an enduring legacy in the imagination of western European thought, reaching all the way up to these 'young neighbours of the Acropolis' of today.

It is this same perception on the dreamed past, that subconsciously transfers powerful sensuous and corporeal qualities through its constant experience by mere breath and vision, that the famous storyteller Hans Christian Andersen also noted in regard to the children he saw wandering around the ruins of the Acropolis during his own pilgrimage to the hill in 1841:

> *"How enviably fortunate Greek children are to play, albeit blissfully unaware, amongst the classical places, breathing ancient dust in the shadow of the Acropolis* […]*"* (ANDERSEN 1988: 54).

Those early 'young neighbours' of the Acropolis are already regarded to carry the ontology of the Greek nation on their shoulders at that time, though 'unaware' of its emblematic significance within the European context. On the other end of the line contemporary children – their antecedents in the area – probably make similar appropriations but have been driven to become conscious of their heritage, with particular awareness of their very specific position within their national and local history, and develop interactive discourses with it. The former are depicted in the iconographies of others and are thus externally signified, the latter constitute themselves in their own individual significations as deeply existential.

Trauma in light and marble

The 'young neighbours' do not passively and automatically state some national identity and great history of the country, but propagate the ancient sculptures through a powerfully transformative and interchangeable bodily command of the monuments.

This corporeal vision endow the topographical features of the Acropolis neighbourhood with the deterministic and idealised self-explanatory symbolisms of grandiose descent and moral lessons, which were otherwise ascribed to the national terrain: the *marble* of divine representation, eternal duration and reflection of beauty; the *light* of the clarity and radiance of civilisation, and the *ruins* of the traumatic history and the nostalgia for the antique glory.

Here are the words of the 'young neighbours', addressing the children all over the world with the awareness of constituting a living heir of antiquity by determinism:

> *"Dear friends all over the world,*
> *We are pupils of the 70th Athens Primary School which is located near the Acropolis of Athens. Out of our class windows and from the courtyard of our school we have a view of the Acropolis, the Parthenon and the statues that are housed in the New Acropolis Museum next to us.*
> *We feel we can talk to them. We know them by their names. They talk to us too. They talk in our hearts and thoughts. However some are missing. In their places there are replicas made of stucco. These are lifeless, they are strangers to us. They do not listen to us nor do they talk to us. The original ones are somewhere else, far away from us. We ask that they come back to their rightful place near us. That they come back home across our school.*
> *That they come back to the Light that created them."*
> (KATSAROU-TZEVELEKI 2010: 15)

The 'young neighbours' personal trauma, owing to the ruined antiquity, appears as a most powerful partaking of the embodied past, sending to the world the most forceful appeal for the reunification of their dismembered cultural body. The intimacy between schoolchildren and sculptures is the advantage of this appeal in comparison to the generic national claim of the Greek state. Its privilege

resides in the existential bond between the two and the uniting force with their homeland which is a physical organism and experiences the dramatic dislocation of its members from the body of its history.

These life episodes are ethnographies of shared moments of play, but also of protests and cries for the disembodied community of neighbours. However they also extend to stories of powerful activism from the part of the children, stressing through the immediacy of communication their determination to materialize the repatriation of the sculptures only via the mutual consent of the children and the sculpted figures, beyond the scope of any external intervention. Their close intimacy renders their claim just as powerful as any official negotiation on the issue.

In Greece this sensuous and individual corporeal understanding of antiquity that the Acropolis schoolchildren demonstrate, has been occurring in personal contexts aside the institutionalised frameworks of nationalist ideals and in an unbroken continuity with 'pre-modern' ideologies (HAMILAKIS 2011), sometimes suffocating within the big dogmas, but always becoming constitutive of the past, even if negative, critical or dismissive of it. This particular Greek experience has generated an idiom of modernity that is specifically historical and has been extensively inspiring for later Greek ideologies, including the project in discussion.

Critical regionalism

The synthesis of Hellenism from the fusion of classical authority with contingent embodied and indigenous qualities, has been the product of a long fermenting vision that goes back to the so-called 'Generation of the 30s' in the first half of the 20th c. (see papers in TZIOVAS 1997; 2001). This inspired intellectual initiative, negotiated the aspect of Greek-ness 'between the local and the global' (YALOURI 2001; 2010; PLANTZOS 2012a: 229) by challenging it to an esoteric quest for its indigenous heritage properties to which it attributed even further universality. This project constituted a mythical, exotic and exportable Greek-ness out of the national paradigm, one that aimed at recolonizing western thought. This is something which still had to be fulfilled since the particular historical circumstances of the first half of the 20th century, demanded the immediate self-affirmation of the Greek state, and inspired the nation's ideology across all social, cultural and political legitimacies. A significant agenda within this project was to merge the sensuous and corporeal material of the Greek experience, in a post-

romanticism and post-idealism context, to re-empower the grand narrative of the nation.

As further discussion is beyond the scope of the present paper, I will only refer to what is of immediate interest for us here, namely two certain architectural projects that were then run in the area of Acropolis to enhance the power of the nation's ideology in alignment with the concept. Both are still visible in the contemporary landscape where the 'young neighbours' live and play, so that, apart from their acquaintance with the nation's ideals through the official heritage strategies and generic ideological background, the Acropolis schoolchildren constantly experience by immediate corporeal connection the heritage of this influential trend where antiquity is recreated and recontextualised.

In the 1950s the architect Dimitris Pikionis responded to the project of the landscaping work in the Precinct of the Acropolis, by developing a language of architectural regionalism (PIKIONI – PIKIONI 2010; BASTEA 2003), seeking its drastic incentives in the ontological reference of this particular landscape to the past. By utilising rough-finished marble paving slabs in various shapes that appear irregular, yet are strictly geometric, Pikionis envisioned classical architectural features inside the contemporary and inherited present. Thus, in the world of the 'young neighbours' exists a terrain of a recreated past.

Another influential architect of this generation, Patroklos Karantinos (GIAKOUMAKATOS 2003) had designed and constructed in 1931 the building of the Primary School in Kallisperi street, opposite the south slope of the Acropolis, this very same building where the 'young neighbours' are still housed today. Equally inspired by the powerful pursuit to capture the contemporaneity of the past and its retransformation, rather than any mimetic reproduction of antiquity, he disputed the neoclassical trend and instead effectuated a minimal geometric building of two floors which faced the hill on its long side and was permeable to light and the unmediated view of the Parthenon through big and long windows on the upper floor. Some years later, the same architect ran functional modifications to the old Museum of Acropolis in line with the same ideological perspective.

The influential current of the 1930s further solidified that Greek-ness is rooted in the ancient soil, and updated the concept of the attachment to the earth and its appropriation as major cults for the nation's reaffirmation as a dream culture (HAMILAKIS – YALOURI 1999). In the words of Loukaki:

> "Evidence from the press and literature indicates that the adoration of the Parthenon and the plethora of ways in which it is embedded into Greek society are remarkable, involving a combination of highly intermingled scholarly and popular elements" (LOUKAKI 2008: 253).

The official strategies propagated by the Greek state solidified this sanctification of the past (HAMILAKIS 2003: 56). The national project, deploying the methodology of national ceremonies and bio-politics (FOUCAULT 1990: 135–159), is still thriving today. The revival of Greek classical drama in the 1950s, with the aim to establish cultural continuity between modern and ancient Greece, is such an example of the use of a technology of embodiment, as are the parading statues that have come to life in the Opening Ceremony of the Athens Olympic Games in 2004 (PLANTZOS 2008: 13; 2012b: 228). Plantzos writes that these

> "performative bodies are deployed through the pageants and the staged re-enactments as a message abroad, certainly, but mostly as a pedagogic and disciplinary device at home, as a lesson of what to do with your (national) self. As a result, contemporary Greece deploys a self-made neoclassical bio-politics in order to construct itself as a modern European nation, Hellenist as well as Hellenic" (PLANTZOS 2012b: 166).

In respect to the young age, museum activities and didactics directed to children in Greece has considerably emphasised the deployment of such bodily and personification pedagogies to perpetuate and solidify the appropriation of the past. However, the resourceful background of the recontextualisation that was inherited from the generation of the 1930s is usually reproduced in simplistic ways that achieve the intellectual subjugation of schoolchildren to a given national dogma, but do not cultivate any further reconsideration.

This aspect should be particularly emphasised here for our better understanding of the ideological background behind the Parents Association-managed project. The 'young neighbours' carry multicontextual ideologies varying from the nations grand narratives of the classical past, to their very individual appropriations of the antiquities in their everyday life in their immediate locale. The engagement of some children of non-Greek origin with the project should be also noted as part of this contextual diversity. The collaboration with the Museum of Greek

Children's Art has been a key choice for the project and must have been chosen for its seminal research approach on art pedagogy and its deep insights on the history of Hellenic culture that have been creative for conventional Greek modernist ideologies, however without exploring extreme reconsiderations. For this reason its involvement has in many ways secured a respectful revisit of the nation's ideals and an integration and incorporation of any possible diversified approaches, for example from the pupils of non-Greek origin, and their alignment with the narrative of the admired nation. I have already noted above that sharing the glory of Hellenism has indeed been very much desired by some of them in order to upgrade their status within the Greek society.

Indigenous claim

The personification of the ancient monuments and their enlivening as participants in a dialogue has connected the receiver of history, here each child, with the distant past. The past is transported to the present and becomes lived. In this manner, the past is familiar, the child's own participatory field, and a terrain which he or she is shaping. This kind of discourse has generated the transformation of the ideological axis of the paintings from the national, grand narrative to the local, an important step to take towards the empowerment of the more personal aspects of culture. Thus, aside from being an 'Identity Strengthener' and an 'Eternal Truthteller' in the earlier words of Loukaki, the Acropolis also becomes for the kids what she would have called a 'Personal Thriller',

> "conferring not only a sense of individual identity, but also acting as a source of inspiration, of personal representational capacities, like the experience of time and space and the motivation of individual imagination" (LOUKAKI 2008: 17).

However this significant step towards the recontextualisation of the monolithic evolutionist past, by emphasising the embodied experience of the pupils with their cultural heritage, has essentially utilised the material available from the axiomatic stereotyped ideals of the national and the global scale, easily identifiable with a perpetual and mythical Hellenism. By drawing resources from earlier cultural transformations of the palimpsest of antiquity and its 'authentic' glorious background back to the beginning, the 'young neighbours' have built a singular idiom of their local homeland, a local fantasy as a kind of critical

regionalism or what Hamilakis has called 'indigenous Hellenism' (HAMILAKIS 2007: 27).

Within this framework, the 'young neighbours' have probably not managed to surpass the dominant stereotypes of eternal truth to any large extent, and possibly failed to raise an unconventional critique that would be open to silenced and sceptical sides of the past; a language that would interrogate singular authoritative explanations and conservative rhetoric and would explore contemporary plurality and diversity, not being afraid of upcoming clashes. Indeed, HAMILAKIS (2012) forcefully emphasized that it is on this ground the confrontation of localism with vernacular discourses will empower societies in the future. What he called the more profound and multi-faceted clash between the logic of the capital and the logic of community, or the clash between uni-temporal past and multiple archaeologies enacting multiple, simultaneous times, has not been achieved by the children's project which decided to stay more connected to the fundamental and primordial ideals of Greek-ness rather than lean to the side of a more pronounced indigenous voice.

I have to admit that it was with disappointment that I realised that the response to the schoolchildren's project from the various audiences such as in the museum, the institutions, scholars or other sites where it has been presented, was attached to the universality of the Parthenon marbles rhetoric and to a colonial and national essentialism. Although enthusiastic for the embodied and emotional art, and touched by that, responses have so far mostly failed in captivating the indigenous element of the kids' narratives. External viewers of the artworks or readers of the anthology are always caught by the national aura of the trauma and the fact that it is expressed by children, the personal aspect of appropriation still evading together with the social significance of the local initiative on the community's cultural patrimony. Similarly this concept on the local claim for the homeland advocated by the indigenous community of the schoolchildren was not particularly realized either by the national and international visitors of the temporary exhibition of the pupils' artwork held at the Archaeological Museum of Delphi in 2011, where a book of notes was specifically set to assemble individual reactions. Their response primarily engaged with the clichés, debating the Acropolis marbles as colonial cultural heritage and world shared monument in the British Museum:

> "All of your rocks belong to us" (signed by 'London').
> "I think they need to get over it because we have them and we will destroy you if you try to get them back."
> "Do the children understand what would have happened to the statues had they not been taken?"

If it did not go for mocking:

> "I think that we have enough Goddamn rocks here anyway, let them keep the statues, they are ugly anyway!"

And it was only one certain comment, possibly by a child, to notice the participatory role of the kids in the artworks:

> "… I like that some kids put also themselves in the picture!"

And yet the children's art narrations have, achieved a refreshing reframing of modernity, not solely because of the inventive imagery, the strong emotional qualities and sensuous excitement of the project, or the activism for the heritage politics, but primarily thanks to this very empowerment of the social involvement of their indigenousness as an active social claim, which they developed without social discriminations and exclusions, as each of the local members could participate on equal terms without being comparatively evaluated.

The effectiveness of the 'young neighbours' idiom of social engagement on the support of a local social claim, remains to be evaluated through time, in potentially many subsequent events of renegotiation. The symbolic imagery of the schoolchildren have constituted polysemous biographies that await their further redefinition within the contemporary and future social contexts, as we have seen it happening with other renegotiations of the cultural heritage. Similar to the Acropolis project, such recontextualisations of antiquity often utilise its more dogmatic features to achieve a broad range of social negotiations from conventional reproduction by official agents, to the extreme end of a categorical or even defiant intervention within non-institutionalised milieus. The representations of kouroi, for example, from a political, anarchist or sexual disposition (Plantzos 2012a: 227), the use of the Acropolis for the raising of giant banners along the ancient fortification wall with messages from the trade unions of the state employees of the archaeological site, or by political parties for dominant national or global

protests, relocate the past from the timelessness and austerity and embed it inside a concrete and timely social context. A similar particular social and historical participation for their claim was wishfully evoked by the 'young neighbours' and their parents who invited this personal, experiential and non-exclusionary discourse of the emblematic Acropolis and the Parthenon and the transformation of the subsequent conventions produced all the way across the palimpsest from the antiquity to modernity.

Therefore I want to particularly stress here as a conclusion that the local social community in the environs of the Acropolis so far existed and reacted on the side of the national agenda and in general on the side of any cultural heritage strategy and touristic politics for the monument par excellence, mostly resting in observing or admiring its land, rather than expressing any reaction to its powerful resourceful classical property. The local-managed project of the Acropolis parents was in fact the first initiative ever undertaken by the indigenous people of this glorious place to speak for their own past – including any past and not only the major restitution issue. It was the voice that they themselves cried to the world, the language they wrote, and the story they narrated, on their own choice, not on any official or state support. However conventional the project turned to be in respect of the national ideals, its launching on the very local decision is its very great moment of significance.

As a final remark I will go back to the point made in the beginning of this very same paper, where I advocated that the local school's Parents Association project is beyond any politicised engagement. I now want to add that, although it not an issue manipulated by a certain political area, yet, it does involve a critical degree of political and ethical awareness in the sense of actions taken on a local initiative to advocate a stance of a 'home' self and of a local social consensus. It is precisely thanks to this multi-temporal and multi-sited contextualisation of life stories that this certain patrimony, as any past, would acquire meaningfulness, even if it encompasses a hybridization and deconstruction of the dogmas. I would end this paper with what I consider to be the broader lesson taken from this, that in remediating the Acropolis as a-temporal and fixed, resurrected from the past, these personal narratives discussed here, fluid in time, emphasise its timeliness and transcendence of the past-present from the social geography of the micro-scale. The momentary interactions and narrations, realist as much as idealist – made of the stuff of national symbols but with a personal mediation – emerge a

vision of overcoming stalemate regimes of culture and a great potential for local social ideologies for the past to come into sight.

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