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Published by: Taylor & Francis, Ltd. on behalf of the Association of American Geographers

Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/2564372

Accessed: 05/04/2010 09:09

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Whose Genius Loci?: Contrasting Interpretations of the “Sacred Rock of the Athenian Acropolis”

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This article identifies different creative approaches to the question of the dialectic of space and place, the genius loci, in the case of the most significant symbolic locus of Western civilization, the Acropolis of Athens. It presents different schools of thought on genius loci (the spirit of the place) and considers the ways in which different readings of a particular site affect architectural creation and its evaluation. Thus what may seem a mere exercise in good taste and architectural compositional ability hides deeper issues of power relations, political and ideological symbolism, national identity, and, in this case, global and local property rights over the hub of Western civilization. These issues are joined by comparing the landscaping of the Ancient Agora by the American School of Classical Studies in Athens with the landscaping of the site connecting the Acropolis to the Philopappos Hill by the Greek architect Demetris Pikionis. Key Words: Acropolis, conflictual national and global interpretations of space and place, creation and reproduction of new representational spaces, genius loci, landscaping.

The Sacred Rock of the Acropolis occupies a conspicuous place in the heart of the Athens plain and in the city’s profile. As a symbol both of democracy and of high cultural achievement, the Rock continues to cast its spell over the modern world’s imagination. The classical art of the Athenian Acropolis still holds sway as a norm of tangible beauty against which we may judge the state of architectural development of modern societies. This norm (for its special characteristics, see Boardman et al. 1989; Camp 1992) has occasionally been challenged (Shohat and Stam 1994) but more often on the basis of its interpretation and modes of appropriation rather than on its inherent qualities.

“The Acropolis” is, it should be noted, an established Western term for what in Greece is known as “The Sacred Rock of the Acropolis.” The eradication of the Rock’s sacredness and rootedness in Western representations is instructive. The name’s transformation into a free-floating, disembodied signifier in Western thought bears the marks of a colonial appropriation by naming, a dissociation of the meaning of the Sacred Rock from the contexts of Greek geography and history. For while it is true, as Giorgio de Chirico (1989) so acutely noted, that the Sacred Rock often assumes the aura of a “stone vessel” that “sails away” (Figure 1), persistent Western efforts to appropriate “the Acropolis” politically, economically, and artistically have long threatened to uproot the meaning of the Sacred Rock from its particular embeddedness in Greek society and culture. Such threats have periodically provoked resistance on the part of the Greeks whose struggles to build a state and forge a sense of national identity have been closely bound up with the interpretation of their architectural and archaeological patrimony (Loukaki 1994).

Greek mythology is the arsenal and foundation of Greek art (Rose 1984; Griffin 1989). Myth familiarizes human thought with abstractions and conveys an understanding of the essential (Dowden 1992). Myth has political functions: it can support or reverse definitions of the civilized life, enlarge the sense of mortal limits (Griffin 1989), and satisfy the need for integrated meanings. Marx and Hegel agreed that mythology initially helps overcome the forces of nature, but that its power tends to vanish with the advent of real mastery over those forces (Rose 1984:87). Elsewhere, however, Marx indicated a deeper need for the mythical: “there can be no social development which excludes all mythological relation to
nature . . . and which accordingly claims from the artist an imagination free of mythology” (quoted in Porphyrios 1990:19). Even in the heyday of modernism, theorists like Siegfried Giedion declared that “the rationalist and exclusively materialist attitude, upon which the latest phase of Western civilization has been grounded, is insufficient” and that “monumentality springs from the eternal need for people to create symbols for their activities, for their fate or destiny, for their religious beliefs and their social convictions” (in Norberg-Schulz 1990:165).

To intervene in the material conditions or symbolic understandings of a complex of monuments such as those that rest on and surround the Sacred Rock of the Acropolis is to intervene, therefore, in the self-understanding of a whole people. The reactivation of art and myth is considered by some as a reflection of a cultural childhood, as a means to interpret historical change (in the landscape as well as in society), and as part of a process of achieving self-knowledge and development through mimesis. But it has also been held that for mimesis to be creative, it must be of a “higher level” (Rose 1984:91), or, as Plato argued, it must be attentive to the qualities of the original, correctness, as opposed to unreflective servitude to similarity (Patterson 1985).

Here I focus on the relations of monumentality and myth on the Acropolis. Are myth and monumentality constants or are they undergoing perpetual reinterpretation? To answer this question, I examine how myth is kept alive across generations and the role that monument preservation and enhancement play in that process. Furthermore, if interpretations and practices change, then who determines the changes and in what ways might the process of reinterpretation become contested? Can urban design creatively explore the possibilities of place by treating history as an ongoing part of daily life, by searching for new ways of social becoming, by elaborating on different political identities, and by seeking difference in the midst of homogeneity?

My vehicle for considering these questions is the archaeological landscaping of the Sacred Rock of the Acropolis during the past forty years. Archaeological landscaping traverses many levels other than the purely aesthetic. It can envelope a monument, mediating between it and the rest of its urban environment, and it can suggest, compose, and comment on the various meanings of the tangible past. Landscaping can express sublime fears and desires concerning national identities and aesthetic traditions as well as prosaic concerns about urban land uses (such as the
purposeful enhancement of archaeological sites as tourist resources). It can also be expressive of power relations, e.g., who appropriates urban space and for what purpose, and it can intervene in the collective memory and forgetfulness that are always bound up in the preservation and enhancement of urban features.

The Sacred Rock of the Acropolis has been subjected during the twentieth century to two major creative attempts at landscaping (and to the landscaping of the relatively limited area before the Odeion of Herodes Atticus). The American School of Classical Studies at Athens (ASCS) has deployed practices and principles, quite different from those of the Greek architect Demetris Pikionis. A critical assessment of these two modern landings reveals the diverse ways in which monumentality and myth are integrated into social life and politics. It also permits explorations of the contrasting ways in which space and place are related through social action, of how “place” should be constituted, and of the way the conception of “place” becomes part of a contested terrain of ideological struggle. Architects and urban designers in particular have frequently invoked the idea of genius loci (“the spirit of the place”) as a privileged means for understanding the special qualities of place. Can it be argued that one or the other of the landings of the Sacred Rock better expresses the genius loci, and if so in what sense? As preface to that question, some consideration of contested ideas surrounding the concept genius loci is useful.

**Contested Interpretations of the Genius Loci**

The original Roman meaning of the genius loci accented the sacredness of a place, devoted either to a particular deity by humans or to a shrine of a local deity. The genius loci is a place’s fingerprint, as it were, but produced with similar ink as that of other places. The ways in which it is understood indirectly affect our assessment of humanity’s successful integration in the natural setting, as well as our evaluation of how myth, monumentality, and art enter as active elements in cultural history. The genius loci has been understood, however, in different ways. Its meaning depends, first of all, upon whether history is understood synchronically (history as eternal repetition) or diachronically (history as evolution and change). In a synchronic reading of genius loci (Norberg-Schulz 1984), humans represent nature by discovering and respecting it as unchanging. While Norberg-Schulz, drawing on Heidegger, tries to track down the quality of Greek natural places and the corresponding classical architectural composition, his account fails to explain the changes in Greek forms before and after classical times (Figure 2); nor does it identify the specific social evolutions that enabled humanity to become central in Greek art and history.

Herbertson’s understanding of historical change, is, by contrast, diachronic:

There is a genius loci as well as a Zeitgeist—a spirit of a place as well as of a time . . . . The spirit of a place changes with the spirit of the time; it alters with man’s relation to the region. The historian has to reckon with both in his great cycle, the geographer has to consider both in trying to understand the present regional consciousness (1915:153).

Our understanding of the genius loci also depends on whether we perceive culture and nature (and myth) as continuous or discontinuous. Some scholars believe in the absolute primacy of human will and intervention (as opposed to Herbertson). Sfaiello (1991) argues that landscape changes are adaptations determined by architectural programming and visions. Similarly, Le Corbusier (1974) claims that harmony is an exclusively human construction that can be raised to the condition of nature:

We must realize clearly that Doric architecture did not grow in fields with the asphodels and that it is a pure creation of the mind. The plastic system of Doric is so pure that it gives almost the feeling of a natural growth. But, none the less, it is entirely
man's creation, and affords us the complete sensation of a profound harmony. The forms used are so separate from natural aspect (and how superior they are to those of Egyptian or Gothic architecture), they are so deeply thought out in regard to light and materials that they seem, as it were, linked to earth and sky, as if by nature. This creates a fact as reasonable to our understanding as the fact “sea” or the fact “mountain.” How many works of man have attained this height? (Le Corbusier 1974:193)

A third arena of contestation concerning the genius loci arises out of different interpretations of the interaction between the universal and the particular in a certain place and time. Universality is sometimes interpreted as a matter of morphology, which may be based on organic (the commonness of principles of social organization) or conditional similarity. But here, too, we find synchronic and diachronic interpretations enter in, with the latter dividing between extra-historical views (in which the world is seen as changing under the effect of “a world of spirits,” as Focillon [1982] puts it) or historical views (in which the world is seen as changing in response to composite human needs, processes, and struggles). The commonality of morphological solutions that some identify for the genius loci can also be interpreted as a manifestation of common human needs. Antoniades (1992), for example, sees epics as distillations of culture and epic architectural spaces as reflections of diverse geographical origins. This allows him to approach the human condition on a universal level while appreciating collective memory and tradition expressed via myth. Focillon (1982), for his part, talks about “families of spirits” linked by secret bonds that recur repeatedly in different epochs and places. “Life is a form and form is the way in which life expresses itself” (Honore de Balzac in Focillon 1982:12). Eastern architects, in speaking of a secret anagrammatic life hidden and dispersed throughout the world, express similar extra-historical sentiments (in Papadakis 1988), and even Frampton (1992:75) argues that all architectural symbolism has a metaphysical basis. Rossi (1991:103) gives us an idea of the difficulty in synthesizing the religious, social, and topographical complexity that the genius loci is in historical terms. Although in the Renaissance the genius loci took an increasingly topographical and functional aspect, some, like Viollet le Duc, in their effort to interpret architecture as a series of logical operations based on a few rational principles, admitted the difficulty of transposing a work of architecture from one place to another. In Viollet le Duc’s general theory of architecture, the locus participates as a unique and physical place.

The complicated nature and the unique qualities of the genius loci often dictate gaining consciousness of the powers that conceive and materialize new landscapes. Indeed, the genius loci is often seen as the outcome of a concrete historical process and the production of places as a multilayered interaction between nature and culture, in which mythical, ethnic, aesthetic, and artistic considerations enter (Dodds 1973; Purini 1988). The effect, as the Greek architect Pikionis puts it, is expressive of “the common and the universal,” while remaining conscious of the importance of history and society. This position appreciates the dynamic and continuous interface between both the local and the remote as well as the past and the present (Zevi 1986). Archaeological evidence also suggests that style in human artifacts is not universal, but rather responds to specific contexts and to local spatial histories (Conkey 1990).

In more traditional societies, expressions of popular culture and of common understanding seem to have played their role in defining a history of interaction between society and nature (Jellicoe and Jellicoe 1991). This popular sensibility is captured by the Greek poet George Seferis (in Philippides 1984:252) when he writes: “This particular element of Greekness materializes every now and then in new forms (that may be opposite or conflicting) and cannot be defined. However, we feel it.”

In today’s world we rely more on gifted “translators” in the belief that there exists an inseparable liaison between the genius loci and the artistic geniuses encountering it (see Hunt 1992). The latter usually favor highly personal, meta- or extra-rational modes of creation and knowledge (see Goulet 1981). In their effort to unveil and enhance what they consider most essential physical, social, and spiritual features of places as a way of looking for the deeper truth of things, artists inevitably encounter the aforementioned vital distinctions of the genius loci. In the tradition of Kandinsky (1981), these “translators” express themselves, their society, and the universal through their own subjectivity. Artists thereby translate through the inner life of the individual a part of social reality and collective experience.

Understandably, then, the genius loci is an unstable and controversial concept, since the unpredictability of subjective interpretations must
be coupled with the complexity of decision making and other social aspects in the interpretation and appropriation of places. While it plays upon "the essence" of places, it does so in ways that open up as many questions as they resolve. Possible combinations of personal and social parameters can result in more or less static or dynamic interpretations of the \textit{genius loci} depending on how and why they include or exclude various considerations in the production of places, especially when the "translators" belong to different cultural backgrounds. Thus contestations over the essential and authentic character of places mask vital issues of who, exactly, has the power and privilege to define standards of judgment for the understanding and transformation of a particular place such as the Sacred Rock of the Acropolis.

The Sacred Rock of the Acropolis: The Setting and Early Plans

The summit of the Acropolis, the nucleus of the City of Athens, has been continuously inhabited since the late Neolithic period (3000 B.C.) (Figures 3 and 4). Structures on the Acropolis were destroyed many times and in many ways; much blood was shed to keep free this Rock that was Athens's symbolic heart. Successive generations dealt with structures on the Rock according to the demands and needs of their times. They revised the landscape by removing, altering, and restoring structures, or by creating new ones. But of all of the buildings and ruins of the Rock, the most important are those built in the time of Pericles (495–429 B.C.) or shortly afterwards. These include the temples of the Parthenon (447–438 B.C.), the Erechtheion (421–406 B.C.), the Athena Nike (449–427 B.C.), and the monumental staircase and entrance of the Propylaia (437–432 B.C.). The summit and slopes of the Rock bespeak the close relationship between nature and culture: on the summit reason prevailed, while the caves under the plateau were reserved for the irrational element (Mumford 1989). The Erechtheion celebrated Erechtheus, "the son of the earth." Next to the Erechtheion, the Temple of Pandrosos celebrated the Sacred

![Figure 3. Site position in Greece and in Athens. Source: School of Geography, Oxford.](image-url)
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Figure 4. Map of Athens and the site. The Acropolis and its parks are at the heart of modern Athens. Source: School of Geography, Oxford.

Olive, the oldest in the world. These ancient adorations of the earth and plants indicate the Greek sense of continuity between nature and culture. Browning's (1989) dynamic interpretation of Greek landscapes as the product of interactions between history, nature, and culture suits the Acropolis Rock:

Greek holy places still have a strange, almost mystical, appeal, deriving as much from the landscape itself as from the man-made setting. In the natural forces that gather round them it is not difficult to feel the presence of the gods and to understand their meaning in the ancient world. Greek architecture, too, seems to grow out of the ground beneath it, partly because three thousand years of weathering have almost transformed it into a product of nature rather than art. Yet no architecture is more intellectual than the Greek, no lines more calculated, no intervals more subtly balanced. Perhaps it is this combination of opposites that gives these buildings their unique power, a power that survives even in ruin.

Since the founding of the Greek State in 1830, the transformations of the “eternal” space of the Rock have been many—planting the dry surrounding hills and the Acropolis slopes, rounds of excavations, preservations, and restorations of the monuments on and around the Rock, the recovery of the Ancient Agora at the foot of the Rock, the creation of neoclassical Athens on the slopes of the Acropolis, various landscapings, the pedestrianization of road networks, and the changing city background. Only the Parthenon was destroyed by invaders’ arson, later becoming in turn a Christian church, a Turkish mosque in two phases, and, after bombardment by Morosini and looting by Lord Elgin, a restored open museum. The great city goddess, Athena, was also replaced by the Mother of God, who later acceded the Parthenon as a secular monument. The mythical space of an idolatrous city became the symbol of a Christian nation. This once austere battlefield became a locus of urban joy and exaltation.

These changes were the result of bloodshed, ongoing contestations, and sacrifice in Greek struggles for liberation and for representation on various levels. Thus the credit for the Greek temples’ present situation belongs to their creators, to nature that offered the materials for their construction, and to society (both local and global) that has maintained them to the present time and reproduced the mythology that surrounds them. On the basis of evidence from the press and literature, Philippides (1991) recounted the remarkable stability and plethora of ways in which the Parthenon is embedded in Greek soci-
The adoration of the Acropolis involves, of course, a combination of scholarly and popular elements. Both are mediated by cultural specifications and by personal experiences. These elements are so intermingled that they cannot be distinguished in the minds of nonspecialists. Yet despite the controversies in modern Greek society over the relevance of successive Greek heritages, the language question or the perceived ideological role of the Acropolis, the Rock remains the dominant national symbol.

The nineteenth-century aesthetic approaches to the Rock have been contested by, among others, a grassroots expansion that made the place a vibrant locus of urban pleasure, Christian religiosity, “high art” cultural activities, and accidental and planned encounters of “sameness” (Greeks) and “otherness” (tourists). During Holy Week, the innumerable little churches and streets around the Acropolis are packed with worshippers. On Good Friday, long processions of the Epitaphios (Corpus Christi) intersect in fragrant rivers of candles, flowers, palmodies, and incense. More recently, the little church of St. Demetrious, which Pikionis’s landscaping restored as part of the setting, has become a favorite place for weddings and baptisms. In fact, the silent adoration of the Sacred Rock of the Acropolis confirms the view that imagination is shaped not only by visual manipulation, but by loyalties to places, their political meanings, and their capacities to empower individuals (Harvey 1996). These loyalties appear to be at the root of struggles over representation and the creation of new urban myths.

The first proposal for landscaping the Acropolis dates to 1832 when the surface was arid and bare. The design emanated from two young architects. The Greek Stamatis Kleanthis and the German Eduard Schaubert were friends, colleagues, and students of Karl Friedrich Schinkel, the architect of the Bavarian court. Their design included the creation of an archaeological park on the north side of the Acropolis which would become an architectural museum without equal. Their plan left little room for Byzantine churches, save in adding an exotic and picturesque touch to an otherwise coherent whole. The designers established several priorities: (1) the belief that Greece had an important role to play as curator of ancestral glory, (2) the need to advance the development of archaeology, (3) a conscious view of ancient monuments as spectacle, (4) selective evaluation of past time, and (5) a view of Byzantine architecture as a picturesque supplement to the value of classical monuments.

In 1834 Schinkel proposed to build the palace of the first king of Greece, Otto, son of the Bavarian king, on the Acropolis (Philippides 1984; Papageorgiou-Venetas 1994). His proposal strove for an elegiac atmosphere replete with an asymmetrical layout of the architectural masses, continuity between open and closed spaces, gardens with pergolas, multi-leveled atriums, and selected kinds of trees (pine, orange, palm, cypress, and olive) and plants. He reduced the Parthenon to a mere decorative pattern in the gardens. While this “sacred” proposal was rejected by Greek and German specialists, it reflects the kind of “disrespectful” freedom that would have been inconceivable to most Greeks. Schinkel’s picturesque composition of landscape and buildings thus reinterpreted Greek history by commingling it with Germanic royalty.

The dream of an archaeological park remained alive and recurrent in many subsequent designs (see Travlos and Kokkou 1974). Nearly a century later, in 1920, the Supreme Technical Council proposed unifying the archaeological sites of Athens in an effort to introduce gardens and parks in the city (Moutsopoulos 1993)—a proposal probably affected by Western landscaping ideas and contemporary “garden-city” concepts. In 1945 K. Biris, in his capacity as Director of the City Planning Office of Athens, proposed the creation of a Grove of Ancient Athens. His proposal called for the preservation of all medieval buildings, some of the characteristic nineteenth-century houses, and the crossroads of the old city, as well as the establishment of museums and other intellectual foundations which would make the site into a unique intellectual center for Greece and the world. Biris’s archaeological park did not come to fruition, however, because of the turmoil of civil war (Simeonides 1991). Subsequent reevaluations of the built heritage resulted in the post-1980 protection of Plaka, the neoclassical core of modern Athens enveloping the Acropolis (Presidential Decrees 522 D/19.9.80 and 617 D/8.11.80). The desire for unification of archaeological spaces remains strong, and various design and construction initiatives are presently under way. By the time of the two landscapeings of the Acropolis, the Rock and the hills surrounding it were planted with local trees and shrubs. More important, the archaeological research during the nineteenth century had assured non edificandi [building prohibition] status for the immediate
surroundings of the Acropolis and of monuments like the Olympieion and the Stadium (Papageor-


In antiquity the Ancient Agora, also known as Kerameikos, was the most distinguished part of the city after the Acropolis itself. Lying on the northwest side of the Acropolis, the Agora was the socioeconomic heart of the city, while also having a religious aspect. Its form was shaped in Hellenistic years (third to second century B.C.) and its functions were partially interrupted for political reasons in Roman times, although building continued. In the Middle Ages, it was covered with houses. Until the early 1930s, it lay under a neighborhood, known as Vlastarou, which was an extension of the urban fabric of Plaka (Figure 5).

Greek governments felt a moral obligation toward the ancient world, as well as to the whole of the “civilized world,” to unearth the Agora. The Agora area was declared expropriated for archaeological excavation in 1833, shortly after the country’s independence from Turkish rule, and a price was set for the property by decree of King Otto (Shear 1933:97). However, other pressing priorities of the government prevented the realization of the plan, either then or at several later attempts to revive it. Leo von Klenze, an architect for Otto’s father, the Bavarian king, had an alternative proposal for the royal palace, namely that it be built in the area of the Ancient Agora instead of the Acropolis and that it include the Hephaisteion (a classical temple overlooking the Agora from the low hill of Kolonos Agoraios) in its gardens. This objet trouvé treatment of classical monuments was repeated in 1914–1918 in the ancient sites around the Acropolis (Papageor-

giou-Venetas 1994:74). The first excavations, carried out in 1858–1912 by the Greek Archae-

ological Society, uncovered the Stoa of Attalos and the so-called Stoa of the Giants (Shear 1933). Numerous finds were made with the opening up of the trench for the Athens-Piraeus rail-

Figure 5. Vlastarou: The Panathenaic Way. The Vlastarou neighborhood was built on dense antiquities. The Panathenaic Way, depicted in the Parthenon’s frieze, led to the top of the Acropolis and was used for official celebrations and processions in Classical times. Source: Permission granted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens (ASCS), Agora Excavations.
way in the 1860s; this line, moreover, defined the boundaries between the modern and the ancient city (Figure 6).

The dream seemed so important that, in 1921, the archaeologist Alexandros Philadelfeus, Director of the Acropolis, suggested to the National Assembly that the Greeks celebrate the centennial of their revolution against the Turks by excavating the Agora (Philadelfeus 1994). Although enthusiastically accepted, the project had to be dropped the following year when a Turkish military victory caused one and a half million Greeks from the Asia Minor coast to take refuge in metropolitan Greece, especially Athens. The scarcity of housing aroused protests by Vlastarov's inhabitants, who had previously accepted the possibility that their property might be expropriated. Even so, a decree was issued on July 1, 1924 for compulsory expropriation of the space, but it was not carried out. The Greek government again had to find a compromise between its idealistic plans for the city and dire financial and social circumstances.

**Landscaping the Acropolis: Divergent Interpretations**

A decade after Biris's proposal, the Acropolis was landscaped twice—once by the American School of Classical Studies in Greece (1954–1960), once by the Greek architect Pikionis (1954–1958). Both landscapeings acknowledge the double identity of the Acropolis as simultaneously the supreme symbol of Western culture and a profoundly rooted geographical entity, but their ensuing representations and reproductions of this symbolic place differed radically in the priorities, politics, and interpretations of *genius loci* and in aesthetic solutions.

**The American School**

The ASCS was primarily concerned with reestablishing and reconfirming an attachment to the roots of Western civilization in classical soil. The ASCS’s landscaping was at the same time an inquiry into American rootedness. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, classical Greece, and particularly the city of Athens, constituted the starting point of the Europeanness so familiar to American intellectuals who were acutely aware of their cultural dependence on Europe (see Morris 1994) and desirous of distancing themselves from it.

The Acropolis from the American Revolution onwards reflected these attitudes since it constituted an important symbol of republicanism and democracy, and of rootedness in ancient civilization as opposed to absolutist or monarchical European traditions. Ancient Greek was almost adopted as the official language of the infant U.S. (Clogg 1994), and Greek-revival architecture expressed an American sense of nationalism while depicting America as a democratic paradise (Sutton 1992; Muschamp 1993). This symbolism, though originating in the elite, was not confined to it; popular manifestations appeared in farmsteads and houses across the American landscape of the 1840s–1850s (Sutton 1992). For Americans, the classical form denoted high culture and provided the proof that they were properly taming and domesticating the wilderness (Lowenthal 1976). They were less concerned with iconographic implications of Greek temples than with stamping "civilization" in the form of a standard temple facade and precut columns onto their piece of wilderness.

By the start of the twentieth century, Greek archaeology was already established as total mastery of the past based on the “objective” manipulation and classification of vast bodies of artifacts. The ideal research strategy entailed excavating a major site and publishing the results (Morris 1994). The philosophical position adopted by
ASCS shared this view of archaeology, but with a strong ambition for breakthrough progress (see ASCS 1985; Capps 1993). Athens was particularly challenging because it was (and is) the seat of many foreign archaeological schools that were established in Greek geographical space after the founding of the Greek state. The ASCS's effort to excel in disciplinary "wars" reflected the general political and economic influence of the U.S. (for the political and power-related aspects of archaeology, see British School at Athens 1986; Gathercole and Lowenthal 1990; Kalpaxis 1990; Kokkou 1977; Loukaki 1994; Radet 1901). Another intention was to establish a permanent dialogue with this space of power (as is usual with foreigners; see Lancaster 1947; when the Germans took Athens in April 1941, the first thing they did was raise the swastika on the Acropolis). This dialogue was not independent of Cold War and post-World War II struggles for American cultural as well as economic, military, and political hegemony in Europe.

The Search for Greekness

The Greek point of view confronted a very different set of problems. Landscaping the Acropolis involved much more than enveloping the archaeological site and creatively mediating its position in the urban fabric. The process was as much about the crushing dialogue of modern Greek society with its ancient glorious past, about the country's place in the modern world, and about acceding to the state the role of guardian of this invaluable human heritage (with all the questions of property rights that this entails). This project was thus both a symbolic and a physical process of unearthing and enhancing various historical strata of the city. The Acropolis landscaping project thus rekindled for Greek society, and particularly its artists and architects, the challenge of articulating a "national" architectural style (Konstantinides 1967; Loukaki 1994; Philippides 1984).

The search for Greekness in the visual arts and literature has persisted since the establishment of the Greek State. This quest is difficult because Greece is an ancient country, because successive civilizations have flourished, and because places are extremely varied and idiosyncratic. In a country punctuated by mountainous, flat, and insular places, we find a comparable richness of morphological idioms. These include the neoclassical idiom, with its variations; the eclectic; various modernisms; revivals of superficial, conservative or even vulgar classicism; the rich countryside tradition and the picturesque, under John Ruskin's influence; and even inspiration from the East. Changes in these idioms, especially from the 1920s onward, are reflected in the use of different building materials in accordance with the changing Greek interest in other epochs of Hellenism.2

The "moral of beauty" (as the Nobel Prize-winning poet Elytis 1990:16 calls it), or what might be called "architectural Greekness," entails the obligation to pay tribute to Greek landscape and history. For the creative strata of Greek society, the perceived neglect of this moral has been a deep, open wound. The words of the architect Aris Konstantinides express the constant agony of many Greek architects and artists:

"The problem for us Greeks of modern times is difficult, extremely difficult. We live in a space, whose main characteristic is quality and frugal and artistically composed form, with landscapes and works of people of high artistic wisdom. Our presence in the same place is historically under the pledge and the obligation of an absolutely responsible action (Konstantinides 1967:109)."

Nevertheless the search for Greekness, for identity in architectural and artistic terms, has remained elusive, ambiguous, and fluid (Vacalo 1983; Kontaratos 1986; Philippides 1984). To be sure, such quests are not unique to Greece since national architecture has always posed a challenge for architects (see Carter et al. 1993; Frampton 1992; Hunt and Willis 1990; Papadakis 1988; Pevsner 1969, 1993). But in Greece, as Philippides (1984) observes, searching has been a way of escaping from the chasm between the realities of lagging, dependent development and the chimera of idealized aims. Greekness thus defined is nostalgia for a phantom, the terms and conditions of which have been externally determined from the outset, partly through almost inhumanly high aesthetic standards and expectations. The dilemma, according to the painter Tsarouchis (1986:171), is that "Greece, even if she [sic] is not so, or does not believe herself to be so, is condemned to respond to a generalized, blurred international opinion, that she still is a center of aesthetic radiation, even today."

The Landscaping of the American School of Classical Studies

The American School of Classical Studies interpreted the site of the Acropolis through its
archaeological landscaping of the Ancient Agora. The ASCS’s establishment in 1881 was the result of a combined effort by twelve universities in the U.S. and Canada. By 1985 the number had increased to a hundred and thirty-five cooperating institutions (ASCS 1985). The ASCS’s ambition to be set apart from the other Athens-based archaeological schools would materialize in the wake of a unique opportunity. Following earlier unsuccessful internal pressures for unearthing the Agora, in late 1924, the Greek government began negotiations on the possibility of foreign archaeological schools undertaking the expenses of the necessary land expropriation (Lord 1947). The prospect was enthusiastically accepted by the ASCS with assurance of financial support from John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and the Rockefeller Foundation (Capps 1933; Lord 1947; Meritt 1984; Thompson and Wycherley 1972). The School regarded the privilege of excavating the Agora a high honor and “a great, amazing success” (Lord 1947:preface; Thompson and Wycherley 1972). It later acquired exceptional spatial privileges (e.g., the right to have four excavations per annum instead of the regular three), made impressive progress in classical archaeology, offered its archaeologists the opportunity to secure professional fame, and drew on previous explorations of the site by Greek and German scholars (Thompson and Wycherley 1972; Lord 1947).

The ASCS had hoped that site acquisition could be achieved in a few weeks, but the inhabitants exercised strong political pressure against expropriation. They were supported by the majority of newspapers, which wrote of Greek citizens being driven from their ancestral homes by Americans (Lord 1947:201). By late 1928, negotiations were finally concluded after a then-anonymous donor had given the $250,000 for the inception of the project. In 1929 laws passed by the Greek Parliament and the Senate declared the space an archaeological site and defined the area of expropriation. The funds for the enterprise came from private donors, universities, societies, and foundations in the U.S., including besides Rockefeller, the Ford, Old Dominion, Samuel H. Kress, and Bollingen foundations (Lord 1947; Meritt 1984; Thompson and Wycherley 1972). Although Greek archaeologists retained control of the Roman Agora and the Library of Hadrian, the “American zone” consisted initially of twenty-four and a half acres which was increased to twenty-eight and a half acres by 1939. The American area was delimited on the north by the trench of the electric railway, on the south by the Acropolis and the hill of the Areios Pagos, on the east by the Stoa of Attalos, and on the west by Kolonos Agoraioi Hill (Shear 1933; Lord 1947). At the time of the original concession to the ASCS, both Greeks and Americans shared the view that the Agora of classical times would be unearthed (Thompson and Wycherley 1972:224). The inhabitants reacted ferociously but ineffectively. Work in the “American zone” started festively in May 1931 (Lord 1947) (Figure 7). Around 350 buildings were demolished (elsewhere in the city, this initiated a new ethos of massive demolitions of neoclassical buildings for the sake of more intensive land exploitation). The excavation stopped during World War II but resumed after 1945 and continues today (ASCS 1985; Camp 1992). The zone of excavations was progressively enlarged with Greek expropriations to the north of the site.

Although the “American zone” is small compared to the area of the ancient city, the finds there have been spectacular and the excavations have gained international recognition for revelations of Athenian history and topography (Meritt 1984). They have clarified such matters as the topography of the ancient city, the public and private life of the ancients, and the history and architecture of the buildings (among the finds were some sherds naming Aristeides for ostracism). The original 1929 agreement between the Greek State and the School included provision for a park within the completed excavations (ASCS 1985). The ASCS park would underscore their archaeological success and would serve as a symbolic and political umbilical cord to both the ancient and modern Greek world. With the completion of massive excavations in the early 1950s, a survey was made by the landscape architect Ralph Griswold and a program was prepared for the landscaping of the site.

Any assessment of ASCS landscaping should acknowledge that it was a pioneering project, at least in Greek lands (Griswold 1961). Homer Thompson, ASCS Field Director from 1947–1967, invited Griswold to undertake the project in 1953. The two men shared a fundamental conviction about the design for the Agora (Meritt 1984), landscaping of which occurred in two phases, 1954–1955 and 1955–1960. Both presumed a “scientific” approach. Although scholars such as Papageorgiou-Venetas (1994) would disagree, Thompson (associated with the school from its beginning and later Director)
argued (1982) that the ASCS landscaping style influenced other nearby archeological sites such as the Temple of Zeus Olympios (Olympieion; see Figure 4).

Since the excavation of the Athenian Agora uncovered evidence of early plantings, the ASCS, in an attempt to create an ancient aspect, replanted the area with species of trees and shrubs that grew there in antiquity. The first trees in the Agora Park, an oak and a laurel, were planted on either side of the Altar of Zeus by King Paul and Queen Frederika on January 4, 1954 (Thompson and Wycherley 1972). The ASCS made a particular effort to use only native Greek plants for which ancient symbolic meanings were known. Meticulous attention was paid to literary or archaeological indications of plantings around specific monuments. In some instances, a particular type of tree was chosen because of its association with the god represented, e.g., oak for the Altar of Zeus (Griswold 1961). Within the Agora proper, plantings were kept sparse, whereas on the hillslopes to the west and south, they were thickened to emphasize the contrast between the open square and the densely built residential and industrial areas framing it (Griswold 1961; Ekonomaki-Brunner 1991). By using plantings as a buffer zone, the ASCS isolated the site from the modern city.

The plantings of the Agora have done much to unify the ancient buildings and ruins that still stand within the excavated area. The desire “to mitigate the dusty bleakness which has been a deplorable aspect of the Agora as of other large archaeological sites in Greece” (Thompson 1982:7) has been a controversial one, however. First, before 1931, the Agora was a neighborhood, not an archaeological site, second, the Greek landscape is not particularly green in the first place. Rich plantings, if implemented, would disregard the dry, austere setting of the Temple of Hera in Argos in Peloponnese.

The depth of ASCS concern for “historical authenticity” remains a matter of interpretation. Griswold (1961) admits that in certain cases, like the planting around the Temple of Hephaistos,
the evidence was not botanical but entirely archaeological (ancient flower pots). In the absence of definitive evidence on the plants of the Agora at various historical times (D. B. Thompson and Griswold 1963), final decisions fell to the ASCS archaeologists. Moreover, “historical authenticity” is a relative and fluid concept. Even the ASCS’s search for absolute approaches had to be compromised on some occasions in order to accommodate modern needs, e.g., the choice of the type of benches.

Griswold was familiar with the site’s climatic and topographical conditions (Ekonomaki-Brunner 1991). As a former fellow of the American Academy in Rome in landscape design, Griswold was acquainted with Mediterranean landscape (Papageorgiou-Venetas 1994). He worked with photomontage (Figure 8) and used plants to frame and enhance the ruins. Instead of “the organic inevitability” of the Greek garden, ASCS plantings filled gaps between ruins with plants that could be easily replaced with others. Thus the ASCS landscaping could be easily erased and replaced. The ASCS’s initial design of the park reflects clear organizing principles, but they seem less apparent today. The sense of unity depends to a considerable extent on the charisma of the site itself. The combination of shrubs with grass in the landscaping of Hephaisteion gives the place a neat but “non-Greek” quality (Figure 9).

In sum, Griswold’s analytical method used plantings to explain, to enlighten didactically, in a way matching the archaeological philosophy of the School: “Beside the bases where the bronze statues once stood we planted dark green laurel to simulate those vertical elements in the landscape” (Griswold 1961:16).

Apart from the didactic clarity, among the virtues of the ASCS park are the possibility for contemplation (Schmidt 1993) and the effective integration of the eleventh-century Byzantine church of the St. Apostles (restored between 1954–1956 by the School with the financial support of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation). The

Figure 8. The Agora landscaping: Griswold’s photomontage. The landscape architect Griswold’s neat and didactic arrangement of the ruins, with its rich plantings, isolates the ruins from the city. The situation today is much less neat. Source: Permission was granted by the ASCS, Agora Excavations.
latter exhibits knowledge of, and sensitivity towards, local landscaping traditions and confidence in the treatment of monuments from later historical times (Figure 10). More generally, however, the ASCS, limited by their constitution and their methodology as a school of classical studies (Meritt 1984:23), interpreted “Greece” as meaning exclusively ancient Hellas (Lord 1947:245; Meritt 1984).

We should encourage Byzantine investigation . . . especially in excavation; but our ultimate reason for existence must always and necessarily be the pre-eminence of things Greek over things un-Greek, or pre-Greek, or post-Greek. It is in so far as we insist on this old faith of the humanists on the humanities . . . that our school will have a torch to hand down to future days. (Carpenter, General Director of the Agora excavation, in his report for the year 1927–1928 quoted in Lord 1947:208–209).

The School was keenly aware of the need for good relations with the Greek government and people (Meritt 1984:61), and indeed the Greek State assisted unfailingly, both in the provision of material resources and through the cooperation of directors and staffs of archaeological agencies and museums (ASCS 1985; Thompson and Wycherley 1972). Support and enthusiasm for the School's activities (especially after the War) came from various channels, official and academic. The Greek community showed interest and support in many ways, e.g., in the form of aid from the army, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts, of technical guidance in the organization and the maintenance of the park (Thompson and Wycherley 1972), and of monetary gifts (Meritt 1984). This support was probably the result of a combination of postwar euphoria for the Allies' financial support, the dynamism and scholarly nature of the School, and the realization that this was a project of great national importance. The School staff included some Greeks, such as business administrator Anastasios Adossides (“never has the School had a more devoted, loyal, wise and effective member,” Meritt 1984:16), and John Travlos, the architect who designed the reconstruction of the Stoa of Attalos; both helped the School establish the cordial relations that were essential for its success (Thompson and Wycherley 1972; Lord 1947), and many citations and awards were thus bestowed on the School by the Greek Government and various Greek societies (Meritt 1984).

The different national traditions, needs, and cultures incorporated in the two sides resulted, however, in the ASCS's neglect of some vital sensitivities of the host environment: the aforementioned Greek turn toward a new search for identity and the deep concern of the Greek intelligentsia for the protection of the natural and archaeological landscape, officially represented by the Deanship of National Landscape and Towns (Simeoforides 1991; Pikionis 1985; Pikionis 1994). This difficulty caused confusion over aesthetic and other issues, such as the acceptability of building a museum in the Agora. The initial ASCS proposal for a museum to house its finds put the structure in the heart of the Agora landscape, west to the Areios Pagos amidst a high density of ruins (Kokkou 1977; Schmidt 1993).
The proposal stirred the unanimous opposition of Greek intellectuals like Konstantinides and Biris (Simeoforides 1991), and was rejected by the Athens City Council. Those reactions were justified by 1948 as recoveries of rich deposits of ancient remains ruled out modern construction. Konstantinides’s critique, however, focused on two other issues: first, moral reservations on the practice of archaeology, and second, deep concern with the aesthetic and the role of museums, particularly in that area. He preferred humble forms that blended self-evidently with the landscape, were not antagonistic to the ruins, and enabled a spiritual relationship between visitors and the site (Konstantinides 1987). The ASCS offered a conciliatory proposal to reconstruct the Attalos Stoa and to use it as the Agora museum, and this alternative was accepted by the Greek government (Kokkou 1977). Misunderstandings can also be discerned in Griswold’s (1961:16) complaints that Greek authorities (the Central Archaeological Council) prevented him from reconstructing the Roman bleachers giving access to the Temple of Hephaistos. Greek authorities preferred a more “typical Greek goat-trail.”

The creation of national networks of “consumable” archaeological sites suitable for mass tourism (Papageorgiou-Venetas 1994:396–401) and the choice of tourism as the main redevelopment policy were objectives strongly urged by the U.S. through the American Mission for Aid (Kafkalas 1984; Meritt 1984:40). The creation of an attractive tourist image anchored in a network of famous archaeological destinations, e.g., Olympia or Delphi, is just one indication that aesthetics and archaeology mediate ideological, symbolic, and economic processes (Loukaki 1994). Simultaneously, both the official representatives of the state and the intelligentsia shared a concern with national tradition.

The Director of the School, C. W. Blegen, in meetings between the American Mission and the Greek Archaeological Service, assured a grant towards the reconstruction of the Attalos Stoa (Meritt 1984:40). The Stoa was chosen because of its size, the adaptability of its design, the feasibility of its reconstruction, and the ambition to provide the modern world with an example of “this most characteristic type of ancient civic architecture” (Lord 1947:232). This site would furnish an opportunity “to bring the School into a world-wide focus of attention and stature” (Canaday 1956). The highly political and symbolic character of this project attracted the personal interest of President Eisenhower and was consistent with his desire that overseas American educational units work toward a closer understanding between American and local thought. The project also attracted financial support from the Rockefeller Foundation (Lord 1947).

Today the reconstructed Stoa provides the ASCS landscaping with a dramatic backdrop to the east (see Lord 1947; Thompson 1977). This long, two-story building (Figure 11 immediately after its reconstruction; Figure 12 today) with double colonnades was built between 1953–1955. The reconstruction made use of local raw materials and was carried out under the authority of the Department of Restorations, then in the Greek Ministry of Education (Thompson 1977). The dedication of the finished Stoa on September 3, 1956, was attended by the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, as well as King Paul and Queen Frederika (Thompson and Wycherley 1972; McKendrick 1981). While some Greeks regarded the Stoa as a useful and didactic building, others saw it as controversial restoration that contravened the ruin-filled tranquillity of the Agora and the Acropolis monuments (Papageorgiou-Venetas 1994; Schmidt 1993). To the Americans, the paternalistic philanthropy of the creation of the Agora (as product of the reconstructed Stoa and the planting) concealed a deep political symbolism: “Thus a philhellenic gesture of a Hellenistic philanthropist from the East (Atalos) has been repeated in our time by the philanthropists from the West: the new world redressing the balance of the old” (McKendrick 1981:403).

On June 3, 1957, the ASCS turned over to the Greek Ministry of Education the excavations, the park, the rebuilt Stoa, and the Church of the Holy Apostles. The government took over responsibility for guarding and administering both excavations and museum, but the ASCS retained control of the workrooms, study collections, and further excavations within the Agora (Meritt 1984:64). The official designation of the Agora as an important public park entitled it to free water and free water-piping installation under the whole area. Today, it forms part of the green belt that encircles the Acropolis and will gradually embrace many other ancient monuments of the Greek capital. Griswold’s irony shows that cultural misunderstandings could also occasionally become hubris: “But when it came to a modern wall to be torn down and the aid of the army was
enlisted, they enjoyed the destruction so much that they were disappointed when we wouldn't let them tear down the temple, too” (Griswold 1961:17).

The ASCS garden is about human feelings. The Americans who worked there certainly loved the place in particular and Greece in general, and they have been deeply involved with their work. But this mythical space is also used on behalf of power relations and their expression in space, first because ASCS was better positioned than the Greek State to undertake such a project in the 1950s, and second, because the political influence of the U.S. made possible such an advanced spatial intervention.

The Greek Landscaping: Pikionis’s Theoretical Principles

Demetris Pikionis (1887–1968) was a prominent professor of architecture at the School of Architecture, Athens. Educated in both Eastern and Western traditions, Pikionis approached Greekness in architecture and nature from a deeply emotional, respectful, and "pantheistic" point of view. For him, Greece has always been affected by the antithetical and intricate currents that crisscross an area lying between three continents (Pikionis 1985). He believed in the invisible unity of the world, a deep internal identity he called Nomos or the Law. This Law prescribes the "necessary" and "useful," the "common" and "essential" (according to Dionysios Solomos, the Greek national poet) that makes human work "natural," real, and objective.

In accordance with his philosophy, Pikionis believed in the existence of a harmonic unity between light, air, and the geometry of a place:
On wandering on this ground, kingdom of limestone and of clay, I saw the rock to transform into an architrave and the red clay to dye the walls of the imaginary temple. The pebbles of the river Kladeos seemed to me like heads of heroes and the statues of the pediments like mountains. The hair of Zeus like cliffs, and this polymorphous mountain, wandering on which I re-composed the harmony of its outlines, seemed to me like a Greek statue (Pikionis 1985:77).

He believed in *homorhythmia*, the rhythm that governs the forms of life, the topography of the earth, the local flora, and of art. Given this continuity, this physical and psychic stasis, Pikionis found it much preferable to let nature envelope ancient ruins with its purest poetry, to let them obey nature's principles. To him, plants were part of a constructed, organic ideal type, “an impression of the natural randomness, governed by unknown laws, which is the secret of plant life” (Pikionis 1985:251). Indeed, he maintained that landscaping was necessary only if the archaeological site had been previously excavated. In approaching archaeological sites, the designer should proceed simply, inconspicuously, and unaffectedly (Pikionis 1985).

In 1954, Konstantinos Karamanlis, then Minister of Public Works and later twice President of the Greek Republic, followed the recommendations of the senior planning authorities and commissioned to Pikionis a large (80,000 square meters) and unusual work (Philippides 1984): landscaping the Acropolis’s most spectacular west side by connecting the Philopappos Hill to the Propylaia (see Figure 4). Pikionis was considered suitable in virtue of high moral standards, a diachronic historical consciousness, and a willingness to devote himself completely to the task.

Pikionis considered the Acropolis Works an aesthetic adventure or pilgrimage (Papageorgiou-Venetas 1994). One of the practical problems he had to resolve was access to the Acropolis and to Philopappos. Instead of facilitating motor vehicle access and creating a large-scale modern infrastructure, however, Pikionis made the approach more convenient for pedestrians. Among his intentions were a protective ring around the classical ruins, the accommodation of continuing excavations (Papageorgiou-Venetas 1994), and the creation of a space between ancient, popular, and modern architecture. In Frampton's (1992) terms, Pikionis’s landscaping represents a case of progressive regionalism. This task sparked his imagination and contemplations about the relations between space and place. He was confronted by a site already reforested, but which, in the case of the hill of Philopappos, had been covered by urban houses during the Hellenistic (third to second century B.C.) and Roman (second century B.C. to fourth century A.D.) periods. Pikionis integrated ancient traces into new compositions and connected them and other individual elements with a system of footpaths. His attitude would today be open to criticism as “anti-archaeological,” as a personal interpretation of the historical landscape (Ekonomaki-Brunner 1991). But for Pikionis, this approach opened ongoing dialogues between the ancient, the popular, the Byzantine, and the neoclassical. Establishing this sort of historical continuum in Greek cities constitutes a fundamental desideratum in Greek society today; this is attested in the treatment of nonclassical monuments close to the Sacred Rock (Loukaki 1994). Pikionis proceeded more empirically than Griswold, the ASCS architect, confining himself to a series of sketches of the site (with whose topography and climate he was very familiar) instead of photomontage.

Pikionis was influenced by various historical and geographical styles, as well as numerous world heritages and myths. He also drew on a range of artists. For example, Pikionis may have been inspired by Paul Klee’s 1929 painting, “Main Roads and Side Roads of the Nile” (Figure 13), which alludes to an aerial survey of archaeological traces clearly distinguished from more recent divisions in the land. Van Geest (1989) believes that the painting inspired Pikionis’s pavings (Figure 14), but while the painting looks modern even today, Pikionis’s road architecture seems a timeless and self-evident part of the setting. But closer to the most important ancient monuments, the road forms obey more austere geometrical patterns. Ascending Philopappos Hill, Pikionis’s road resembles a work of modern art produced with concrete and hewn stones. By varying the width of the paving and the layout of the borders, he engages a dialogue with the natural setting (Ekonomaki-Brunner 1991). Pikionis’s interest in popular art and tradition and in the half-elaborated “brutal” stonework typical of popular architecture (an interest that dates back to the Italian philosopher Vico) shows the influence of Ruskin.

Pikionis was also influenced by the Cubists, primarily Picasso and Braque (Figure 15), and made extensive use of architectural collage, which was equally a legacy of the Spanish architect Antonio Gaudi and of Byzantine architecture. Architravés and structural elements of
pagan temples of antiquity had already become fillings in Christian walls (Van Geest 1989). Pikionis also recycled architectural elements from neoclassical Athens, then in a process of demolition. He incorporated these alongside ancient and popular elements. His complaint about this "not unavoidable sacrifice" (1985:137) is permanently inscribed on the same material, marble, used for the temples on the Rock. The material certainty of architectural elements that were impregnated with humanity" (Golding 1991:62) provided Pikionis with unexpected connotations—an escape from the "aridity of geometrical abstraction" (Iscan 1986:30) and a vent for embitterment over an Athens in a state of demolition.

From Cézanne, he acquired an appreciation of an intense relationship to landscape and of clearly defined (although continuous) relations between architectural and natural elements. From early de Chirico, he appreciated the mystery of his settings. Pikionis activated this ambiguity to stimulate interest in spaces beyond his limits, e.g., as with the boundaries of the St. Demetrius court-

yards. From the Greek painters of his time (Vacalo 1983), he learned to attend to forms rather than colors. Indeed, color emerges only from the tonal contribution of his structural elements. His frugality of means is also apparent in the lack of statues and the absence of water surfaces. In Pikionis's landscaping, the Acropolis is reflected in the rainwater pools that form on his vistas, then disappear.

In spite of these influences, Pikionis's style is unmistakably Greek. The collective appreciation of Byzantium in the 1920s led him to use pergolas, terracotta decorations, and stone benches and to create the rich skin textures of St. Demetrius's walls. But in the space around the church, he reintroduced a succession of fluid, semi-open spaces (neglected by neoclassicism) and architectural forms made of rough-hewn building timber. Those refer simultaneously to the Far East, to courts of Greek monasteries, and to his interpretation of the hut as the archetypal origin of the
Doric style. His combination of natural and structural elements makes it seem as though the buildings and other elements are rising from the ground in homage to the nondivisibility of nature and architecture (Figure 16).

For Pikionis, the strengthening of common hopes and aims is sieved through a vigilant aesthetic conscience that precipitates the form and meaning of each and yet maintains a coherent whole (Figure 17). His rearrangement of fragments in an archaeologist's manner affected Shepard's (1991) closed cybernetic system. And drawing from the Cubists, he emphasized the nonperspectival third dimension. His succession of views with introvert, extrovert, and orientated visual horizons is cinematic in its effects (Ekonomaki-Brunner 1991). Different views of the same object from sudden and unexpected angles emerge hierarchically, selectively, and in restricted number—the Acropolis being the main visual target. His vistas are systematically calculated in static and dynamic terms, as parts of the composition and of the dynamic movement of the visitor. He thus introduces a sense of the fourth dimension, of trajectories in time and space. In this way, he furthers the Cubists' time-space experiments.

Although Pikionis's work (particularly his architectural recycling) did not escape criticism
(e.g., Biris 1966), his was a response to what Philippides (1991:14) calls “the complete, undoubted sacredness of the Acropolis, that has gradually become a break to whatever creative incorporation of the monument into the constant flow of life around it.” His respect for classical landscape and architecture (attested by a variety of pictorial studies and monographs) did not preclude a generous synthesis that bridged the monument’s global and local identity. In sum, Pikionis was (according to the categories of Norberg-Schulz 1984) partly romantic (his intimate and idyllic patios and pavilions and his negligence of life in the rest of the city), partly cosmic (his use of abstract geometrical grids and axes on his main road and in the religious, mystical atmosphere of St. Demetrious), and partly classical (the individuality, clear definition, and sharpness of sitting areas and vistas). And yet his landscape seems eternal, as if it were there from time immemorial. Still, he manages to remain coherent in a modern, not postmodern, way because of an approach to historical time that respects and enhances its flow and continuity.

**Conclusion: An Evaluation of the Two Landscapings**

It is by now clear that there is no single universal, unchanging truth or authenticity of genius loci, and therefore no specific faithfulness due to it, but we may still ask which of the two Acropolis gardens yields the fullest genius of place. Contestation over the proper way to think about the genius loci is also contestation over the proper way to landscape the Acropolis (i.e., the synchronic or diachronic historical reading of the place, the interpretation of the nature/culture relationship, and the rendering of the universal and particular characteristics of the place through both the creative incorporation of the alien and the mythological understanding of the locus).

Both landscaped domains are respectful of modern urban needs in their own ways. There exists, nonetheless, a spatial division among the visitors to the site. The ASCS garden attracts many more foreign tourists, while the daring naturalness of the Pikionis work attracts many more Greek visitors. This division is partly due to other considerations, e.g., the importance of the Agora, its tourist interest, and its conveniently central location. Pikionis’s garden is so engaging because of the way he understands urban reality as something extremely complex and at times contradictory—the marriage of both local and global elements and the procreative prospects for new urban myths and mythical spaces. His genius loci is the product of dynamic interaction between nature and culture, of homage to the global character of ancient architecture, to modern urban and social needs, and to the modern Greek aesthetic. People from the ASCS, given their situation, could and did advance their own way of thinking that involved immense transformative energy in the name of utilitarian practice of archaeology and cerebral erudition. Their genius loci was a scientific exploration, a challenge, a great chance to establish careers, but also an emotional search for rootlessness, extremely dynamic in some ways (strong motivation for this landscape transformation), but static in others (urban history and urban myth interpretation).

Indeed, the American School appears to have been largely indifferent to the vibrant modern city. The genius loci of the ASCS failed to become self-evident, to create “urban magic,” because it turned its back on the living Athens in favor of the dead historical moment of Periclean Athens. If the genius loci is fixed for all time, eternal and unchanging, then the ASCS’s search for the authenticity and the myth of the classical moment would be unexceptionable. But if, on the other hand, Herbertson is correct in arguing for the historical transformational interpretation of place, then the ASCS’s efforts can be seen as a misguided attempt to impose a dead past on a living present. Furthermore, the imposition of the outsider’s view, with its particular vision of the relations between place and space, invites challenge.

Kubler (1962:13) argues that historians compose meanings from a tradition, while antiquarians only recreate, perform, or reenact portions of the past in already familiar shapes. But this distinction that would see Pikionis as historian and the ASCS as antiquarian, only partly explains the situation because the ASCS staff are also historians of their own cultural and symbolic tradition. There is always a space-place dialectic at work (Merrifield 1993); the interesting question is how this dialectic is worked out, especially in foreign cultural, historical, and aesthetic environments like the Greek, where landscaping is also very much a symbolic act of unearthing layers of memories and meanings. The ASCS lavished care, love, and financial resources upon the reconstruction of this particular place, but did so
from afar, always burdened by the outsider’s symbolic and political baggage—not unlike the nineteenth-century Philhellenes. Today the physical and social environments that preceded the two landScapings surrounding this “place of memory” seem absorbed into the melting pot of forgetfulness. The challenge of a strong alien presence beneath the city’s most sacred sanctuary seems sorted out. One could attribute this instance of urban forgetfulness to a combination of ideological rhetoric and—with the resolution of the housing problem for the displaced inhabitants of Vlastarou—American efficiency and money flow. Forgetfulness seems also to heal local fears (“Greece will become one more French colony”) analogous to those that were expressed with the establishment of the first archaeological school in Athens in 1846. After all, it is the social practice of everyday life that ultimately renders the significance of places (Harvey 1996).

The two landscape designs pivot on a critical question: who has the power, the money, and the talent to interpret and to reveal the essential qualities of the genius loci by redefining the most important urban elements and their environment? The interpretive prerequisites include political will, the clarity of aesthetic visions and aspirations, financial possibilities, administrative organization on the part of the state or other power mechanisms, artistic talent, and the clarity of the views of landscape designers. But this is not all: even if certain powers intervene on a particularly sensitive and “sacred” urban location, the outcome of this intervention will depend on local acceptance or rejection which may take many forms, even vandalism (see Réau 1994). Spirituality and deeply thoughtful, respectful, and imaginative approaches seem indispensable to the interpretive task. The interpretation of the society and history of a place is fuller, as Herbertson (1915) notes, when it exhibits respect for the site’s physical, emotional, and historical aspects seen as flows and not as fixities. If myths defy essentialist understanding, if they change across generations, it is through memory and contestation processes that myths (and monuments) survive. The question then becomes how they are appropriated in urban space and how they reverberate in contemporary politics.

Pikionis’s landscaping was the product of an intense dialogue with place and space on various levels—the artistic, the political, the economic, and the symbolic—in a context of wide, although contested and reconfirmed, popular loyalty to a richly symbolic place. The source of authenticity in his work was not in directly copying nature or the past but in sensitivity to local needs. Urban authenticity involves more than the use of certain spatial devices and recipes that accomplish the desired results. It is a more thoughtful process, a Zeitgeist of place that affects popular imagination when it is the product of an intensive and even conflictual interaction between different desiderata. Heidegger claimed (Harvey 1996) that the native soil sustains the flourishing of genuine works of art in an exclusionary vision. But Pikionis’s landscaping wisely and daringly highlights the various and only superficially contradictory aspects of a place. Still, new forms eventually become integrated (happily or not) into the city. Better integrations of new forms seem partly tied to the launching of new spatial experiments in urban design, experiments that reflect and advance similar efforts in the arts, as artistic and aesthetic continua.

Pikionis’s aesthetic is congruent with the prevailing modern Greek aesthetic, as expressed, for example, in poetry, which accents love for light, for clear outlines in thoughts and architectural forms, and for the human body. Contrary to the skepticism of some contemporary foreign philologists about modern Greek linguistic and political success in articulating meanings, Pikionis managed to do exactly that. In Pikionis’s case, poetry converges with architecture. In other words, similar creative arenas somehow supersede the political and enjoy the relative autonomy of the aesthetic (see Lefebvre 1991:148–64; Loukaki 1994). In these arenas, narrativization, eternalization, and naturalization of ideologies (J. B. Thompson 1990) must be coupled with spirituality and mythopoiesis. Otherwise, modern interventions run the risk of becoming lesser reflections of the original they seek to interpret.

Acknowledgments

Profound appreciation is due to David Harvey for useful discussions of the notion of the genius loci and for splendid suggestions on previous versions of this article. Many thanks are also due to my three anonymous referees and to Neil Smith for their useful remarks and comments. The American School of Classical Studies at Athens allowed me to use pictures of Vlastarou and their archives. Professor Homer Thompson, former Director of the School, kindly provided me with materials from Princeton with a promptness that be-
speaks his undying enthusiasm for the Athenian Agora. The cartographer and the photographer of the School of Geography, Oxford, helped me with their advice and contribution.

Notes

1. The state tried to replace the spoken language (demotic) by a language form “purified” by scholars (a mixture of the ancient Attic dialect with Byzantine and ecclesiastical elements; see Tsoukalas 1982; Filias 1985) and thus to render language an instrument of class distinction and domination (Bourdieu 1992).

2. These include partially elaborated stone, the use of multicolored marble, pergolas, and Byzantine windows. Stone has always been natural, traditional, and abundant in Greece. For a detailed reference to the stylistic changes in Greek architecture since the 1920s, see Philippides (1984).


4. Homer Thompson (1982) decided for classical evergreen myrtle in one row and deciduous pomegranate in the other.

5. It organized the Committee of Athenians to Aid in Restoring the Park of the Ancient Agora which raised money and donated trees and shrubs. Oak trees were sent down by the Ephorate of Epiros from the sanctuary of Zeus at Dodoni (Thompson 1982).

6. For an account of urban memory/forgetfulness as constituents of monumentality, see Loukaki (1995).

7. Expressed in the newspaper O Ατλήτης (The Century), mentioned by Radet (1901).


References


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