

Working Papers on The Nature of Evidence:
How Well Do 'Facts' Travel?
No. 28/08

**A Journey Through Times and Cultures?
Ancient Greek Forms in American
Nineteenth-Century Architecture:
An Archaeological View**

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April 2008



“The Nature of Evidence: How Well Do ‘Facts’ Travel?” is funded by The Leverhulme Trust and the ESRC at the Department of Economic History, London School of Economics.

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A journey through times and cultures? Ancient Greek forms in American 19th century architecture: an archaeological view

Lambert Schneider

Abstract

The presence of classical architectural features in modern Western architecture shows that knowledge from ancient times was travelling through both space and time. Yet despite surface similarities, the architecture of revival was very different to that of antiquity. The classicistic architecture of nineteenth-century America provides a clear case. In contrast to the Roman influences that affected the founding fathers, nineteenth century American architecture borrowed instead from the Greeks. Informed less by archaeology and more by ideology, the American Greek revival saw the architectural forms divested of original meanings and invested with the ideals of post-revolutionary America. Looking at the vectors by which the revival reached American shores shows a double distortion affecting the transmission of the signal from Ancient Greece, such that what survives the great distances and times that separate the two societies is in the end a very different set of facts.

Archaeology constantly deals with so-called “facts.” Public opinion clearly associates the field with demonstrable fact. Since the object of archaeology is investigating the past by analyzing material phenomena, the discipline is expected to have something substantial to say about the “travel” – meaning in this case the *historical continuity* – of such “facts.” The existence of ancient civilizations with their apparent immutability has generated confidence in the existence of cultural and artistic continuity, or at least of a gradual development that transmits facts through time. The numerous modern revivals of ancient forms and ideas, both in scholarship as well as in the broader context, have seemed evidence for the existence of a “cultural memory” within which

facts might comfortably travel through time.¹

This article examines this widely-held popular assumption. I suggest that the answer to the question of what travels and how, largely depends on the interest and focus of the beholder, rather than on the phenomena beheld. Seen in this light, both Classical Revivals in art and architecture and the academic investigation of ancient Greek culture turn out to be a creative undertaking that molds and even invents the shape and meaning of the past. The material with which I will illustrate this is Greek-inspired American architecture of the 19th century, and the public response to this phenomenon.

When the sculptures that Lord Elgin took away from the Athenian Acropolis arrived in England in 1809 and were subsequently exhibited in the British Museum [fig 01],² they became almost immediately world famous. In particular, the pedimental sculptures of the Parthenon, despite their fragmentary condition, rose to celebrity status. Classical Greek sculpture such as the Parthenon pedimentals was considered a symbol of freedom, an embodiment of a freer, unfettered lifestyle than was possible in most European countries at that time. Looking back into the past was linked to hopes for a better future, and therefore had utopian overtones. To the early 19th century European beholders, the Parthenon sculptures [figs. 02 & 03] represented freedom from restrictive etiquette of court dress, from wasp waist and corset, from

¹ A. Assmann: *Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (Munich 1999); L. Schneider: *Postmodernes Vergessen und schmerzfreie Erinnerung. Gedanken zur Akropolis von Athen*. In: U. Borsdorf - H. Th. Grütter (eds.) (Frankfurt/M. 1999) p. 245-266; Schneider 1999; S. Altekamp – R.M. Hofter- M. Krumme, Michael (eds.): *Posthumanistische Klassische Archäologie. Historizität und Wissenschaftlichkeit von Interesse und Methoden*. Kolloquium Berlin 1999 (Munich 2000); J. Assmann: *Religion und kulturelles Gedächtnis* (Munich 2000); K. Ebeling – S. Altekamp (eds.): *Die Aktualität des Archäologischen in Wissenschaft, Medien und Künsten* (Frankfurt 2004).

² Ch. Hitchens: *The Elgin Marbles. Should they be returned to Greece?* (London 1987); Ch. Hitchens: *Imperial Spoils. The curious case of the Elgin marbles* (London 1988); K.-D. Linsmeier: *Stein des Anstoßes*. In: *Abenteuer Archäologie*, vol. 2 (Heidelberg 2006) p. 46-47; B.F. Cook: *The Elgin Marbles* (London 2007); W. Hazlitt: *On the Elgin Marbles* (London, forthcoming).

stifling ties and measured steps, but also freedom of thought and of political action.³ Even nakedness was approved of in this case, with so-called “wet drapery” supporting the illusion of powerful, flowing movement. Casually stretching or in vigorous action the gods proudly present their bodies to the beholder. Might not all people at one time have been able to behave as such, freed from traditional restrictions? Should they not again?⁴

In a remarkable double equation, classical Greek sculpture, like architecture, was understood as a symbol of naturalness, even as a perfection of nature; and nature, in turn, as a metaphor of freedom. So it was not only the fact that one now possessed fragments of Greek sculpture of the epoch that was considered the cradle of democracy – it was the specific *form* of these sculptures that met with an interpretation that had at that time been awakened but was soon eclipsed by other readings.

The enlightened public was well prepared to view these works in the way described here. It had been Johann Joachim Winckelmann – in a sense, the founder both of classical archaeology and of stylistic-orientated art history – who decades before had formulated the daring analogy between Classical Greek sculpture, nature, and freedom⁵:

³ Forster 1996; Schneider – Höcker 2001; Schneider 2003.

⁴ These were the dreams of: Johann Gottfried Herder, *Plastik* (Riga 1778); Gotthold Ephraim Lessing: *Laokoon oder über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* (Berlin 1769); Gotthold Ephraim Lessing: *Wie die Alten den Tod gebildet* (Berlin 1769).- Friedrich Schiller: *Über Anmut und Würde* (Leipzig 1793); Friedrich Schiller: *Über das Pathetische*. (Leipzig 1793); Johann Wolfgang Goethe: *Baukunst* (1795); Johann Wolfgang Goethe: *Einleitung in die Propyläen* (Tübingen 1798); Johann Wolfgang Goethe: *Über Laokoon* (Tübingen 1798); Johann Wolfgang Goethe: *Der Sammler und die Seinigen* [= *Propyläen II*] (Tübingen 1799); Johann Wolfgang Goethe: *Winckelmann und sein Jahrhundert* (Tübingen 1805); Johann Wolfgang Goethe: *Myrons Kuh* [= *Über Kunst und Altertum* vol.2, 1] (Tübingen 1812); Compare: A. Beck, *Griechisch-deutsche Begegnung. Das deutsche Griechenerlebnis im Sturm und Drang* (Stuttgart 1947).- G. Lohse: *Die Homerrezeption im >Sturm und Drang< und deutscher Nationalismus im 18. Jahrhundert*, in: *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 4 no.2 (1997) p. 195-231.

⁵ Johann Joachim Winckelmann: *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerey und Bildhauerkunst* (Dresden 1756). Compare: Johann Gottfried Herder. *Plastik* (Riga 1778). Forster 1996.

thereby initiating a pattern of thought which was met with widespread interest and enthusiasm all over Europe. Winckelmann imagined classical art to be so natural, so unspoiled by luxury and oversophistication, that he even compared it with the supposed innocence, simplicity, and grace of the American Indian. During the first half of the 19th century this notion was occasionally adopted in American art. Like the Dionysus in the East pediment of the Parthenon, Henry Kirke Brown's figure of an Indian of 1850 in Philadelphia⁶ [fig. 04] reclines in a most relaxed manner and is clad in the "costume" of ancient Greek nudeness. Similarly, Shobal Clevenger's rendering of an "Indian Chief" of 1843⁷ [fig. 05], which by its rigidity appears naïve to modern eyes, impressively demonstrates how highly autopoetic and unfounded on observation these equations were, while at the same time very effective. So much for Winckelmann's labelling of Greek art as something perfectly natural and thereby free.

By shifting classical art into a lofty realm of superiority, the material products of Greek society of a specific historic situation mutated into something timeless and even transcultural, as we can see in the strange example of Clevenger's rendering of an Indian in what he presumed to be the form of a rather dry Greek statue, but which was in fact a Roman adaptation of a lost Greek original.

Selected forms of ancient statues found in Rome crept into the minds of modern beholders only on the basis of the belief that they were classical Greek rather than Roman – then were delineated in engravings, thus reducing their sculptural character to a dry contour, and in this form redistributed geographically. In a further step, they were then reactivated and reinterpreted as models of man-in-the-state-of-nature by applying them to the rendering of American Indians, who were thus transitively allocated a similar "natural" nobility as the ancient

⁶ W. L. Vance: *America's Rome* (New Haven/London 1989) p. 302 f.

⁷ From: *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, February 1844. Quoted by W. L. Vance: *America's Rome* (New Haven CT/London 1989) p. 304.

Greeks. So even in this provisional and superficial first overview of the process, “travelling facts” seem to vanish almost completely. Or do they? Let us have a closer look to this.

The beholders of the late 18th and early 19th century ascribed this outstanding quality of naturalness particularly to works of the 5th and 4th centuries BC, which they called the only true Classical ones. The previous broad definition of the Classical was thus narrowed. Within antiquity it was only the *Greek* that was to be awarded with the elitist honorific of “Classical.” Within this, Athenian culture of the 5th and 4th century BC was privileged most of all, with art and architecture of the period considered in the same terms as sculpture. Consequently, the corpus of ancient Greek relics were viewed as a kind of plastic art, a view which should have far reaching consequences.

This new way of looking at sculpture and at art in general *as if it were sculpture* was largely based not upon the observation of objects or processes from the past but made up “at home,” created by an inner process. Winckelmann for instance – that daring prophet of the message of Greek art to modern times – was during his early years in Germany unable to see many Greek originals, and the few he physically encountered apparently made no great impression on him. He managed to write his famous and influential work of 1756, *Thoughts on Imitating the Works of Greek Painting and Sculpture*, before he had ever seen and thoroughly studied original works of Greek art. And even later in his life, when he resided in Rome as kind of a pope in the field of scholarship in ancient art and was at least *economically* able to visit Greece (where he was invited to go to by friends more than once), he refused to do so; turning down the opportunity to see classical Athens. “I am already in firm mental possession of this Greek ideal. I am not at all convinced to discover anything new there,” he annotated in a letter to his friend Johann Hermann Riedesel. This refusal to see original Greek art in its context sounds arrogant and may indeed have been that. But

the episode illustrates well the degree to which this new and sparkling classicism was not a *reconstruction* of an ancient past – but instead a most fascinating construction, a creative act of modelling a vague dream into a firm and detailed picture of Classical Greece, which subsequently gained physical existence both in sculptural art and architecture. From time to time, this creative act made use of archaeological observation, even minute observation, but it was never really derived from archaeological observation as it is often believed to be.

This conception of classicism incorporated social and political implications, yet was romantic from the start – unreal yet uplifting. Winckelmann and the following generations of intellectuals in Continental Europe like Johann Gottfried Herder or Wolfgang Goethe had no means of enacting or even effectively promoting democracy in their home countries, not to speak of establishing radical democratic practices as had arisen in Athens in what had been (according to Winckelmann's classification) the most classical epoch. Regarding Winckelmann himself, it was only by a royal grant for a stay in Rome that he was able to rise above his humble circumstances and escape German provincialism and mediocrity.⁸ Papal patronage followed in his later years.

This idealised conception of classical antiquity was enthusiastically welcomed all over Europe: first in England, but soon on the continent also. Here it fed into the desires of the enlightened public, and yet must have appeared utterly harmless to any established powers, even the most reactionary. In the first half of the 19th century, the ardently Greek-minded rulers of Bavaria and Prussia rivalled each other in turning their capitals (still backwaters in comparison to metropolises like London or Paris) into a new Athens [fig. 06].⁹ Even

⁸ Marchand 1996.

⁹ *Der Königsplatz 1812-1888*. Staatliche Antikensammlungen München und Stadtarchiv

politicians like Count Metternich or Czar Alexander III of Russia seemed enchanted by this dream. So it was not only that the original social and political message of these revolutionary thoughts was soon discarded, but rather, from the beginning this concept of classicism never actually interfered with the even the most (as Winckelmann had it) “unnatural,” and therefore “un-Greek,” attitudes and practices.

Digging for classical remains, conserving and reconstructing ancient buildings as well as erecting new ones in the classical style in an astutely archaeological manner: all this fit perfectly well not only with democratic ideas but also with monarchic rule. Meanwhile, the Greek order – in the sense of the architectural order with all its metaphorical connotations – soon became the language of the establishment all over Europe, of stately or private authority, in milder or (more often) severe form (especially so in German speaking countries and in Greece itself).

The original meaning of the Latin word “classicus” already implied association with an upper class, but as the 19th century wore on, this more social definition acquired an added depth and severity previously absent. In particular, the Greek Doric order and also the slightly less severe and more elegant Greek Ionic order were now interpreted as physical embodiments of what Sigmund Freud would later term the “Super-Ego.” Winckelmann’s original viewing of Greek sculpture and architecture as symbolic of naturalness and freedom had given way to a new definition: a manifestation of class-conscious order, of externally enforced discipline, and of internalized self-discipline through education.¹⁰ Classical Greek art had, in a most problematic way, become symbolic of human culture.

Classical archaeology became a tool for attaining the classicistic goal. In Greece itself, archaeological activities did not seek to disclose the ancient world as it had been, but only confirm the ideals of the so-

München (eds). (Munich 1988); Schneider 2001 p. 24-36.

¹⁰ Marchand 1996; Schneider 1996 p.707-741; Schneider 2003 p. 148-150.

called classical period through the excavation of monumental relics. All that did not accord with these ideals was deconstructed, cleared aside, and annihilated with a terrible rigour. The few remaining skeletons of ruins of the classical period were then heavily restored to form a view fitting the ideology.¹¹ The Acropolis at Athens, for example, came to resemble more and more places like Munich or Berlin. Archaeologists thoroughly adjusted the physical reality of the ancient sites to their idealistic vision. They created sculptural architectonic ensembles of a kind that had never existed in antiquity [figs. 07, 08, & 09].¹²

No wonder that parallel to this at home archaeological strictness, rigorous conformance to the classical, and an almost obedient devotion supported by archaeology were the dominating principles in contemporary domestic building. In reality, these constructions were rarely real buildings in the traditional sense. Rather they functioned as plastic monuments, signifiers in stone: Walhalla's [fig. 10],¹³ grave-monuments or gate-monuments (such as that in Munich by Klenze, or that of Wassili Petrovich Stassow of 1838 at St. Petersburg [fig. 11]).¹⁴ These were not integrated into daily life but instead placed on a pedestal for veneration. Thus most of the archaeologically astute uses of the classical Doric and Ionic order no longer functioned as true architecture, but rather as symbols of a given law and of internalized order. The ensuing disintegration and destruction of historical traces happened not *in spite of* but *because of* Classical archaeology.¹⁵

From the beginning, it had never been pure curiosity but devotion that led people to look back to that far-distant past. What was taken as

¹¹ Schneider 2001 p. 43-59.

¹² *ibid.*, p.11-59.

¹³ J. Traeger: *Der Weg nach Walhalla. Denkmallandschaft und Bildungsreisen im 19. Jahrhundert* (Regensburg 1987); Schneider 2001, p. 32-34.

¹⁴ The gate in the center of St. Petersburg, executed in iron technique, is a free adaptation of the Propylaea on the Athenian Acropolis. It commemorated Russia's successful war against Turkey and Poland in 1834-1838. Schneider 2001 p. 34-36.

¹⁵ Marchand 1996 p. 7-16; L. Schneider: *Il classico nella cultura postmoderna*. In: Salvatore Settis (ed.), *I Greci I: Noi e i Greci* (Torino 1996) p. 707-741.

a fact of antiquity, and what was deemed to be worth incorporating into the present, was determined by contemporary interests and conceptions. The devotion to the distant past was never intended to be inclusive, but was always partial: aimed at only a small fraction both of time and of material. This dream was realised in a physical form by contemporary building activities as well as by archaeological excavation, restoration, presentation in museums, and publication. Seen in this light, classical archaeology appears as a structural complement to other endeavours within the whole bundle of undertakings of modern classicism.

In comparison to this, how does the re-use of the same classical models manifest itself in a country which for so long lacked any foundation in classical archaeology as a scholarly discipline and educational pursuit?¹⁶ America actually offers the richest variety of Greek inspired architecture in the world, in both a quantitative and qualitative sense. American classicistic architecture is often closely associated with the idea of democracy. Hence the title of Henry-Russell Hitchcock and William Seale's book on state capitols erected in Doric, Ionic and Corinthian order: *Temples of Democracy*.¹⁷ And in a sense they are that [fig. 12 + 13]. Nevertheless the title is a misnomer for it suggests that Greek-inspired forms were primarily understood as an expression of democratic principles. This was not the case.

In the first place, it does not fit chronologically. Greek-inspired architecture swept across the States from New England, through the mid-west, and out into to the most remote locations. This wave started not earlier than the second decade of the 19th century¹⁸ – more than a

¹⁶ F. Yeguel: *Gentlemen of Instinct and Breeding. Architecture at the American Academy in Rome, 1894-1940* (Oxford/New York 1991); S. Dyson: *Ancient Marbles to American Shores. Classical Archaeology in the United States* (1998); M. Meckler: *Classical Antiquity and the Politics of America: From George Washington to George Bush* (2006).

¹⁷ Hitchcock - Seale 1976; Schneider 2001 p. 32.

¹⁸ W. Chaitkin: *Roman America*. In: *Architectural Design* 49 (1979) 8/9, Profile 23,

generation after the “Fathers” of American democracy.

These Fathers, the signatories of the Constitution, had also adamantly associated themselves with antiquity, as evidenced by written sources. But it was not Classical Athens with its undesirable fate that they chose for a model, but rather the Roman Republic. Roughly speaking, their attitude seemed to be *Antiquity, yes; Greece, no*. Therefore, they never compared themselves with Pericles, but always with figures such as Cato or the legendary Cincinnatus: so Roman politicians, who were in antiquity as well as in modern reception representatives of a hard-working and austere lifestyle – not unlike American farmers and ranchers at the time. People who would in literature be portrayed standing behind a plough but at the same time were concerned with the community and the state.¹⁹ Later, as Greek elements became fashionable in architecture, decoration, and sculpture, this attitude persisted. So visualisation of democracy was not the impetus of this wave, and even later Greek forms were generally not interpreted in this way.

Admittedly, Thomas Jefferson was well acquainted with French revolutionary classicistic architects and intellectuals who introduced him to Winckelmann’s thoughts.²⁰ So one finds various speculations in scholarly texts that these connections strongly influenced the American artistic and architectural scene at the turn of the 18th to the 19th century.²¹ This alleged impact however is just not based in reality.

p.8-19; L. Meyer Reinhold: *Classica Americana. The Greek and Roman Heritage in the United States* (Detroit 1984).

¹⁹ Kennedy 1989 p. 7-103.

²⁰ Höcker 1997; R.B. Bernstein: *Thomas Jefferson* (Oxford 2005).

²¹ G. Downey: *On Some Post-Classical Architectural Terms*. In: Transactions of the American Philological Association 77 (1946) p. 22-34; Lorenz Eitner: *Neoclassicism and Romanticism 1750-1850. Sources and Documents* (ed. by H.W. Janson) (London 1971); W. Chaitkin. *Roman America*. In: Architectural Design 49, 1979 p. 8/9, Profile 23 p. 8-19; J. Mordaunt Crook, *The Dilemma of Style. Architectural Ideas from the Picturesque to the Post-Modern* (London 1987); Th.J. McCormick, *Charles-Louis Clerisseau and the Genesis of Neo-Classicism* (Cambridge MA 1990); G. M. Ackermann: *A Chink in the Wall of Neoclassicism*. In: June Hargrove (ed.), *The French Academy. Classicism and its Antagonists* (Congress Del/London 1990) p.

Neither George Washington's residence, Mount Vernon (1743 and later), nor Jefferson's Monticello show anything that could be called Greek Revival. The same applies to Washington's governmental architecture during this time period. Both the White House and the Capitol²² [fig. 14] are overwhelmingly Roman. Truly Greek forms were introduced no earlier than 1818, by Charles Bulfinch. And it is only in the basement of the Capitol where you find archaic looking Doric columns copied from an early temple at Paestum which here support a cap vault [fig. 15]. However, this Greek element remains isolated within the architectural complex and isolated historically in the sense that it inspired no successors in the United States.

It was rather the new self-confidence of the next two generations, fuelled by Andrew Jackson's victory over the British troops in 1812, a

168-195; Meyer Reinhold.- B. Köster: *Palladio in Amerika. Die Kontinuität klassizistischen Bauens in den USA* (München 1990); J. S. Curl: *The Art and Architecture of Freemasonry* (Woodstock/New York 1991); Höcker 1997. Most of these architectures in the USA were not designed by professional architects but rather by *builder-carpenters* (Minard Lafever calls them *operative workmen*). Written records are rare. The following literature mainly stems from or deals with renowned and literally well documented architects: Asher Benjamin: *Practice of Architecture* (New York 1833, reprint [= *The Works of Asher Benjamin vol. 5*] New York 1972); Asher Benjamin: *A Reprint of Several Works*, ed. by A. Embury II (New York 1917); J. M. Bryan (ed.): *Robert Mills, Architect* (Washington DC 1989).- A. Jackson Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850; reprint New York 1969); A. Jackson Downing: *Pleasure Grounds. Andrew Jackson Downing and Montgomery Place, with Illustrations by AJD*, ed. by Jaquetta M. Haley (New York 1988); H. M. Pierce Gallagher: *Robert Mills. Architect of the Washington Monument 1781-1855* (New York 1935); Minard Lafever, *The Modern Builder's Guide* (New York 1852); Minard Lafever: *The Beauties of Modern Architecture, Illustrated by 48 Original Plates Designed Expressly for this Work* (New York 1839); Minard Lafever: *The Architectural Instructor, Containing a History of Architecture from the Earliest Ages to the Present Time...* (New York 1856); R. H. Newton: *Town & Davis. Pioneers in American Architecture 1812-1870* (New York 1952); A. Peck: *Alexander Jackson Davis, American Architect 1803-1892* (New York 1992); A. Scully jr.: *James Dakin, Architect. His Career in New York and the South* (Baton Rouge LA 1973); G. Waddell – R. W. Liscombe: *Mills's Courthouses & Jails* (Easley SC 1981); H.H. Reed: *The United States Capitol: Its Architecture and Decoration* (Washington DC 2005).

²² 1793-1863 (the Doric columns in the room under the Old Senate). Architects: William Thornton, B.H. Latrobe, Charles Bulfinch, Robert Mills, T.U. Walter. See: Hamlin 1942 pl. VI left.- G. Brown: *The History of the United States Capitol* (1980); W. C. Allen: *History of the United States Capitol: A Chronicle of Design, Construction, And Politics* (2005); H. H. Reed – A. Day: *The United States Capito. Its Architecture and Decoration* (2005); D. Frydman: *The Great American Architectural Experiment. The United States Capitol Building 1792 – 1868* (2007).

new pride following years of depression that was visualized by this fashion. So it was not so much “temples of democracy” as it was an expression of the new economic prosperity and the new trend toward conspicuous consumption. [fig. 16]

It is revealing that it was not so much the old founding families who followed this fashion, but rather the young entrepreneurs. I think, this is one explanation for the fact that - while you find some examples of Greek revival in places like Boston - there are by far more and more impressive examples found further west: in Troy²³ [fig. 17] or Geneva²⁴ [fig. 18] (both Upstate NY), for instance, so in newly developed areas at that time.

This new class of entrepreneurs were focused on the present and the future. They neither saw in Classical Greece a democratic model, nor did they in any way reverentially look back to a distant past. For them, Greek forms were something akin to a garment suitable for their social status and new-found wealth. A telling example of this attitude is Whale Oil Row²⁵ at New London, CT, aligned by houses with truly Greek Porticos in Ionic order [figs. 19 + 20], all copying a tiny temple at Athens which has meanwhile completely vanished but was drawn and published in printings by James Stuart and Nicholas Revett in their famous work of 1762-1794, *The Antiquities of Athens Measured and Delineated*. “Whale Oil Row”, indeed! The clients and owners of these buildings definitely weren’t Classical Philologists or any other ardent admirers of the ancient past, nor were they civil servants or politicians schooled in and devoted to ancient democracy. Instead, they were more like Melville’s Ahab.²⁶

But it is not just the circumstances in which this architecture was

²³ G.E.K. Smith: *Architecture in America* (New York 1976) p.189; Smith 1981 p. 468-469; A. Scully: *James Dakin, Architect. His career in New York and the south* (Baton Rouge LA 1973) p. 23-26; Schneider 2003 p. 154-156.

²⁴ Smith 1976 vol. I p. 188; Smith 1981 vol. I p. 434-435; Schneider 2003 p. 154-156.

²⁵ c. 1850. All wooden structures. J.R. Ruddy: *New London, Connecticut* (1998).

²⁶ Herman Melville: *Moby Dick or, the White Whale* (London/New York 1851).

built that speak against a tight linking of democracy to these Greek-inspired forms. It is also the contemporary assessment of the phenomenon that points to another direction, and (as we will soon see) the buildings themselves.

Some of the buildings, especially the earliest ones look, at first sight, very much like those you would find in England and Continental Europe: close copies of ancient classical architecture. For instance, William Strickland's remake of the Parthenon of 1819-24 at Philadelphia²⁷ [figs. 21 & 22]. Even these very strict copies, however, were seen in a different light by contemporary beholders [fig. 23]: light not only in a metaphorical sense, but also in its literal meaning. Listen to Philip Hone's assessment of this building on February 14, 1838, a typical entrepreneur of the time, politician and amateur in the field of architecture and the arts:

The portico of this glorious edifice, the sight of which always repays me for coming to Philadelphia, appeared more beautiful to me this evening than usual, from the effect of the gas-light. Each of the fluted columns had a jet of light from the inner side so placed as not to be seen from the street, but casting a strong light upon the front of the building, the softness of which, with its flickering from the wind, produced an effect strikingly beautiful²⁸.

Hone's view is a contemporary one, but these lights still exist and give "physical" proof to his impression. The basic concept of Greek temple building is totally inverted by this. Whereas the massive walls of the cella of ancient Greek temples appeared as something compact and dark behind the shining columns, here the cella shines like a jewel, behind the darker fence of the columns. The columns still appear important, but more dominant is the actual building itself, which after all in this case was "The Second Bank of the United States," so not an empty monument but a building intended for actual use.

²⁷ Hamlin 1942 pl. XX and p. 77; Kennedy 1989 p. 114-115, 194-195; Tournikiotis 1994 p. 213; Schneider 2001 p. 29-32; Schneider 2003 p. 158-161.

²⁸ Quoted by Hamlin 1942 p. 78 n. 19.

This radical inversion of an otherwise minutely copied ancient model is not an isolated case. Similar lighting is reported of the Old Custom House at Erie, PA²⁹ (1839, now Erie Art Museum), and still to be seen at Bethel United Methodist Church at Charleston, SC³⁰ (1852-53) [fig. 24 – regarding the front elevation, an otherwise astute copy of the Athena and Hephaistos temple, the so called Theseion at the Agora of Athens]. Also once a noble bank – even with living quarters to house the president of the United States when he visited this place – was the now First Church of Christ Scientist at Natchez, MS³¹ [fig. 25], erected in 1833 as a fine copy of the Ilissos-Temple at Athens already mentioned. The light behind the columns is again authentic. No less impressive is the appearance of the Actor’s Theatre at Louisville, KY³² of 1835-37 [fig. 26], again originally a bank, designed by James H. Dakin. Even neoclassical buildings of the 20th century such as Henry Bacon’s Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC (1913-22), continue this American tradition.

These examples at first reveal a new attitude toward architecture quite the contrary of that found in Greek antiquity. But the examples are apt to sharpen our ability to recognize a new characteristic of Greek inspired American architecture itself, through which the new and truly sovereign American dealing with the phenomenon “Greek classical” manifests itself.

Not just by gas-lights, but by whole rows of large windows – often double-storey and complemented by spacious doors – American architects converted Greek temple architecture into something

²⁹ M. M. Muller: *A Town at Presque Isle. A History of Pennsylvania* (1997).

³⁰ Schneider 2003 p. 159-160; M.P. Foster: *Charleston, South Carolina. A Historic Walking* (2005).

³¹ Kennedy 1989 p.116-117.- Schneider 2003 p. 160-161.

³² A. Scully jr.: *James Dakin, Architect. His Career in New York and the South* (Baton Rouge LA 1973) p. 26-40; Smith 1976 vol. I p. 350; Smith 1981 vol. II p. 284-285; Kennedy 1989 p. 372; Schneider 2003 p. 161.

completely new: into buildings which seem to wear Greek orders like clothing. The core building never hides behind the columns. The attitude we found reflected by the artificial lighting is also reflected in the buildings themselves.

This, of course, is not just a question of aesthetics. It is the vital functions of the buildings, their uses in life that were proudly shown to a public: proudly in respect to any beholder and proudly in respect to the ancient models. Like jewels, the inner cores of the buildings glow behind rows of Greek columns. It is not just this view from the outside-in that is important and underscores the proud display of function, but also the view from the inside-out. The beholder looks through the ancient columns to the present beyond.

For a villa of around 1850 at Eutaw, AL³³ [fig. 27], copies of the Ionic columns of the classical little 5th century temple near the Ilissos river at Athens were employed to “clad” the core-building and to support not only the roof but also a surrounding balcony, attached in a most unclassical manner directly to the shafts of the columns. The roof again is crowned by a little belvedere which imitates the main structure on a smaller scale. No less impressive is Neill-Cochran-House at Austin, TX³⁴ [fig. 28], erected during the same years. Again, the columns of the Ilissos Temple, as drawn by Stuart and Revett and reprinted in various 19th century American books on architecture, are here used as models, and once more the rows of beautiful large windows on both storeys behind the classical ionic order are to be noticed. The columns of the Ilissos Temple were often used as models, and so it was at the 1843 Wilcox-Cutts House in Orwell, VT³⁵ [fig. 29]. But this time, the columns are five in number – gently abandoning classical rules of Ionic order in favour of attaining a colonnade that does not obscure the view from the large windows behind.

³³ Kennedy 1989 p. 241; Schneider 2003 p. 162-163.

³⁴ Smith 1981 vol. 3, p. 635-636; Kennedy 1989 p. 242; Schneider 2003 p. 164.

³⁵ Pierson 1976 p. 449; Kennedy 1989 p. 35; Schneider 2003 p. 162.

A similar care for the building itself and pride on what is going on inside is shown in public architecture. Nashville's Tennessee State Capitol³⁶ of 1845-59 [fig. 30], designed by William Strickland – the architect of the Second Bank of the US, seen above – presents an enlarged version of the main front of the Erechtheion on the Acropolis with its characteristic capitals but now with 8 instead of 6 columns [fig. 31], and once more there appear blinking rows of windows behind the colonnade. On top of the roof – above a dome not visible from the exterior – is placed a minute copy of Lysicrates Monument at Athens (again taken from Stuart and Revett's book).

The same inverted use of the classical Erechtheion is found in many buildings of the time, as for instance in Madewood Plantation House³⁷ near Napoleonville, LA, erected in 1846-48 [fig. 32] and Avery Downer House³⁸ at Granville, OH, erected in 1842 and designed by Minard Lafever. Even in cases like Judge Robert Wilson House³⁹ of 1843 at Ann Arbor, MI [fig. 33], where the classical order was accurately copied in toto, the same fundamental inversion of the classical concept is to be noticed. All the more so when the classical models were changed in form and proportion: the front of the Erechtheion on the Acropolis, for instance, reappearing at Clifton Place,⁴⁰ Mount Pleasant, TE [fig. 34], erected in 1839. That the builders and architects of the ante-bellum-time were not afraid to frivolously install five (!) columns when otherwise copying their model quite accurately, is due to the same new and distinctly American approach to the Classical, such as at the 1840 Fitch-Gorham-Brooks House⁴¹ in Marshall, MI [fig. 35].

³⁶ Hitchcock – Seale 1976 p. 119; P. L. Hudson – S.L. Ballard: *The Smithsonian Guide to Historic America. The Carolinas and the Appalachian States* (New York 1989) p.314-315; Schneider 2001 p. 27; Schneider 2003 p. 165.

³⁷ Bayou Lafourche, 2 miles south of Napoleonville. Architect: Henry Howard. Smith 1981 vol. II p. 313-314; Kennedy 1989 p. 185.

³⁸ Kennedy 1989 p. 323.

³⁹ *ibid.* p. 235; Schneider 2003 p. 162-163, 166.

⁴⁰ Kennedy 1989 p. 50.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 48.

Exactly the same features are to be found in the American use of the Doric order. Respective examples are a house designed by Elias Carter in Central Massachusetts⁴² [fig. 36] and William Risley House⁴³ of c. 1837 at Fredonia, NY, both with temple porticoes, but proudly presenting the inner building itself with spacious doors and windows. Once aware of this phenomenon, it is worth having a second look at Strickland`s Parthenon-remake, whereupon one is able to see it with somewhat different eyes: we now detect that this building originally had not one, but five large doors and as many square windows above, which were only later closed for reasons of statics [fig. 37].

One of the most ingenious and daring American 19th century re-uses of classical models was the enlarging of the design of the small Athenian theatre-monument of Thrasyillos⁴⁴ [fig. 38] to a structure which could be adapted not only to private villas but also to large scale structures such as warehouses and hotels. See the simple ancient Greek model in the drawing of Stuart and Revett, and what American architects like Gallier,⁴⁵ Dakin,⁴⁶ and, above all, Alexander Jackson Davis⁴⁷ made of it: structures with pillars which can be endlessly repeated always exposing a wide open core building, again with the effect of light described before: Ashland-Belle-Helene⁴⁸ near Napoleonville, LA, of 1841 by James Gallier [39]; or Belle Meade⁴⁹ at Nashville, TE, of 1853-54; or or Bocage Plantation⁵⁰ near Burnside, LA:

⁴² *ibid.*, p. 245.

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 238-239; Schneider 2003 p. 162-163.

⁴⁴ J. Travlos: *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Athens* (Tübingen 1971) p.562-565.

⁴⁵ J. Gallier: *Popular Lectures on Architecture* (1833); *James Gallier Autobiography* (1973).

⁴⁶ A. Scully jr.: *James Dakin, Architect. His Career in New York and the South* (Baton Rouge LA 1973).

⁴⁷ A. Peck (ed): *Alexander Jackson Davis, American Architect 1803-1892* (New York 1992).

⁴⁸ Pierson 1976 p. 456; Smith 1981 vol. 2, p. 312-313; Kennedy 1989 p.159; Schneider 2003 p. 169-170.

⁴⁹ Architect: William Giles Harding. S.L. Ballard: *The Smithsonian Guide to Historic America. The Carolinas and the Appalachian States* (New York 1989) p. 317-319; Schneider 2003 p.170.

⁵⁰ Houmas House. Smith 1976 p.570; Schneider 2003 p. 169-170.

again with doors, windows and a balcony directly attached to the pillars, a concept similarly applied to temple-type houses too. The most lavish specimens of this Pillar Order derived from the Thrasyllos Monument show A.L. Davis's studies for various projects:⁵¹ the huge Astor Hotel in New York [fig. 40] of c. 1830 or the New York Commercial Exchange, projected in 1862.

It is again Philip Hone, who has left us a vivid portrayal of the aesthetic and practical functioning of this peculiar type of classical adaptation. In his diary of September 1, 1835,⁵² he writes about such a building:

We had last night at the pavilion a farewell hop in the dining room, at which the girls enjoyed themselves very much. At eleven o'clock, I retired to my room, lighted a cigar, and seated myself at the front window. The view was unspeakably grand. The broad red moon ...threw a solemn light over the unruffled face of the ocean, and the lofty pillars of the noble ... building, breaking the silver streams of light into dark gloomy shadows, gave the edifice the appearance of some relic of classic antiquity.

This it did not quite do, but "some relic" is quite to the point.

The attitude toward classical models expressed in this architecture and its evaluations sometimes included connoisseurship but did not at all require scientific archaeology, which might have guaranteed a safe travel of ancient facts into modern times. In fact, American builders and architects did not travel to Greece, and with rare exceptions the same applied to their patrons. One simply copied from the same few books – most often Stuart and Revett – reproduced and altered these examples in their own books, and then just built: usually in wood and executed not by trained and learned architects but by carpenter builders.⁵³

⁵¹ A. Peck (ed.): *Alexander Jackson Davis, American Architect 1803-1892* (New York 1992); Schneider 2003 p. 169-170.

⁵² In fact he is referring to the Rockaway pavilion designed by Town & Davis and Dakin: *The Diary of Philip Hone* (A. Nevins ed.) (New York 1927) vol. 1, p.74.

⁵³ Kennedy 1989; Höcker 2000. For exceptions see: Meyer Reinhold 1984 p.256-

Another phenomena, in its own way quite convincing, is a kind of grafting of different pieces onto others, resulting in a new creature – and one which might even have enchanted the ancient Greeks were they not so constrained by traditional building doctrines: Minard Lafever’s leaf-capital [fig. 41], which was very popular especially in the Southern States, is one such example. His publication of 1839,⁵⁴ in which he presented this creation, has the telling title: “The Beauties of Modern Architecture...”. He proceeded as if following instructions in a cook book: take from Stuart-Revett the lower half of the Corinthian capital of Lysicrates Monument at Athens⁵⁵ with all its characteristic leaves and blossoms [fig. 42], then without hesitation add the upper half of a capital from another monument, the “Tower of the Winds,”⁵⁶ found in the same neighbourhood in Athens and also published by Stuart and Revett⁵⁷ [fig. 43]. This second element however was not strictly copied but infused with life, its leaves becoming more juicy and plant-like.

Playfully dealing with historical models, these variations were compatible with other newly created capital forms such as the American Tobacco- and the American Corn-Order⁵⁸. In accordance, Lafever explained his capital in the following words⁵⁹: “This is a design composed of antique specimens, and reduced to accurate proportions; with a view to render it acceptable in many places, instead of the standard orders. ...In many situations this design will be preferable to

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⁵⁴ *The Beauties of Modern Architecture Illustrated by 48 Original Plates, Designed Expressly for this Work* (New York 1839). Lafever’s anti-Roman and pro-Greek attitude is well documented by his statements in this book as well as in *The Modern Builders Guide* (New York 1852).

⁵⁵ J. Stuart – N. Revett: *The Antiquities of Athens*, vol. I (London 1762) chapter IV pl. VI.

⁵⁶ Horologium of Andronikos: J. Travlos: *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Athens* (Tübingen 1971) p.281-288.

⁵⁷ J. Stuart – N. Revett: *The Antiquities of Athens*, vol. I (London 1762) chapter III pl. VII.

⁵⁸ Pierson 1976 p. 403.

⁵⁹ *The Beauties of Modern Architecture Illustrated by 48 Original Plates, Designed Expressly for this Work* (New York 1839) p.102.

those generally in use.” And, as a comment on his Erechtheion-capital variation shown in the same book⁶⁰, he wrote: “This example has neither the proportions nor general features of the antique Ionic order, nor is it pretended that it is in general equal to it; but it is hoped that it may not be ... inferior.”

To be sure, proclamations of allegiance to modernism were standard phrases in architectural and artistic treatises of the time. In view of the extraordinary licence taken by American architects in dealing with classical Greek models during those decades and in view of their non-archaeological approach, quotations like the following make concrete sense: “Go not to the old world for your examples. We have entered a new era in the history of the world; it is our destiny to lead, not to be led.” These were not the words of an anti-classicist, but of a most Greek-minded architect, Robert Mills.⁶¹

I am well aware that I have completely omitted an important stop on the Odyssean voyage of forms from ancient Greece to 19th century America: the English Greek Revival which started a good twenty years earlier than in the United States. It had been England, after all, which through publications such as those of Stuart and Revett, had furnished pattern-books for American classicism and which showed an abundance of Greek inspired buildings which could have served as models for American architecture. It was likewise England, in contrast to continental Europe, where Greek orders were applied to buildings of actual use – such as churches and residences. Did these so-called predecessors really inspire their American followers, as is often implied?

A close comparison, which is of course not possible within this article, would show the contrary to be true. Greek-revival architecture in

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 142 pl.31.

⁶¹ *The Progress of Architecture in Virginia* (MS in private property, year unknown): H.M.P. Gallagher: *Robert Mills, Architect of the Washington Monument 1781-1855* (New York 1935) p. 156-157.

England, since the beginning of this new style, looks markedly different. Normally complete temple-fronts were applied as facades of mansions and churches in an appropriate archaeological manner. So these English examples, even with their variety and relative freedom, remain rather severe looking in comparison to their American counterparts. Almost all English architecture of that time not only looks very Greek in general but – at least, seen from the front – come in the disguise of temples. And, what is most important, the basic concept of ancient Greek temple building above described remains largely untouched in these cases. Telling examples are Henry Holland's Sculpture Gallery at Woburn Abbey in Bedfordshire of 1787-89 and 1801-03: an accurate copy of the late 5th century temple at Ilissos river in Athens drawn and published by Stuart and Revett; and St. Pancras⁶² in London, designed by the Inwood brothers and built in the years 1819-1822 as re-using various parts of the Erechtheion.

In England – much more than on the European continent – the classical temple concept had already been applied to buildings with ordinary life functions such as mansions, churches, and commercial buildings, and this application undoubtedly remained not unknown in America. But the Greek temple front as a representative model on the one hand, and the contemporary use of the buildings on the other, always remained in an irresolvable state of conflict, necessitating varying degrees of compromise in every case, as may be seen from Grange Park,⁶³ Hampshire [fig. 44], executed in 1804-09 as an astute copy of the Athena- and Hephaistos-temple at Athens. Here the core of the building almost hides behind the fence of the Doric temple front.

Not so the more playful and relaxed American treatment of these precedents. Why not arbitrarily stretch columns, even Doric ones for supporting the roof of a house? And in addition frivolously fasten a

⁶² Schneider 2001 p. 26-27.

⁶³ Crook 1994 p. 97-134; Forster 1996 p. 628-683.

spacious balcony to them in a most un-tectonic way, without capitals or even impost blocks? For the first time in history, the ancient Greek order was without compromise adapted to meet both the needs of using a space for living or working and for social representation. American classicists were certainly fond of the classical ideal created in Europe, but they were normally not falling to their knees to worship a remote classical past. With their decidedly non-archaeological and non-devotional approach they have produced a rich and sometimes wild variety of Greek-inspired artefacts.

It was both North and South in the antebellum era, and the New England states as well as the Midwest that adopted this style and became a harbour for travelling Greek architectural elements. It was state architecture and private buildings. It was profane architectures as banks and churches. And within this last category, it was, astonishingly enough, all congregations that used this style: Jews, freemasons, Methodists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and so forth. Why so? What did these ancient Greek orders mean to them? More research has to be done to answer this question in detail. But one factor seems to me apparent: the Greek order was considered perfectly suited for ennobling one's own titles and demands while at the same time being kind of an empty vessel: void of specific ideological ties. To the Americans of the early 19th century, Greek was neither specifically English (as was the colonial style that had dominated American architecture before); it had not been the mainstream style in England during the clashes between English and American troops. Nor was it French, neither in the sense of the *ancien régime*, nor in the revolutionary one. Greek was neither decidedly democratic nor did it serve as a symbol of the Southern States with their slavery. It was this openness which was welcomed by the various religious denominations and ethnic and social groups, who had found a relatively safe home in this country. This concept remained successful for two generations, until the civil war fractioned the

American society deeply [fig. 45 & 46] and made a style like this obsolete, leading to more specialized and thus fractionized forms of self-representation⁶⁴.

We have encountered various attitudes towards the classical [fig. 47]: rigidly devout ones, and paired with these, scientific archaeology. And – in 19th century America – a more upright, unfettered and relaxed attitude to 5th century antiquity. To this however classical archaeology did not belong.

If we look at these processes from a distant viewpoint, facts indeed seem to have travelled [see diagram, fig. 48]. We even know the routes. The forms of ancient Greek Doric and Greek Ionic columns and capitals – these specific architectural orders – started out their voyage from Greece by means of drawings and measurements: first to England and, to a lesser degree, to France. They were published there in books; and they were, of course, also popularized through true modern Greek-inspired architecture in England and all over the European continent. But the main vehicle of their further travel to the United States was not so much detailed knowledge of European Classical architecture. Instead, it was above all the engravings of Stuart and Revett, which made their way to the new world.

At the time, only a handful of – mostly French – publications⁶⁵ existed at all, which were able to convey at least some vague idea of the appearance of the ancient architecture at Athens and other sites in Greece. The views printed in these publications, however, widely appear as kind of ideal landscapes; with ensembles both of ancient looking ruins and complete buildings. The aim of most of these early literary descriptions and pictorial

⁶⁴ Kennedy 1989;

⁶⁵ J. Spon: *Voyage d'Italie, de Dalmatie et du Levant* (Lyon 1687); R. Pococke: *A Description of the East and some Other Countries*, vol. 2 (London 1745); J.D. Le Roy: *Les ruines des plus beaux monuments de la Grèce* (Paris 1758); Jean-Jacques Barthélémy: *Recueil de cartes géographiques, plans, vues et médailles de l'ancienne Grèce, relatifs au voyage du jeune Anacharsis* (Paris 1788 ; 21789); R. Dalton: *Antiquities and Views in Greece and Egypt with the Manners and Customs of the Inhabitants, from Drawings Made on the Spot, A.D. 1749* (London 1791).

representations was not so much to transmit precise data, but rather to fire the public with general enthusiasm for ancient Greek architecture. They sufficed for motivating classicistic building ambitions at home only as long as “true” quotations were not asked for. So they widely lack any accuracy of drawing concerning the proportions of the buildings and almost totally lack metrical information by measurements – if given at all, the user of the book could never be sure if the suggested precision was true or only designed to give the reproduction an air of accuracy. Furthermore, in these publications reality and fantasy is often mixed and interwoven in such a way that anyone who had not seen the originals could by no means separate the two: extant parts of architecture and uncertain reconstruction are rarely discernable; even different buildings were frequently mixed into one, or coherent building structures split into separate “independent” architectural units. A prominent example of this kind of transfer is Julien David Le Roy’s *Ruines de plus beaux monuments de la Grèce* of 1758, which was widely distributed in France and Italy and came out only a year later also in London [see fig. 49].

Le Roy’s publication is known to have circulated also in the United States⁶⁶ but was soon superimposed by James Stuart and Nicholas Revett’s ambitious publication [see fig. 50],⁶⁷ which by the quantity of the monuments taken into account and even more so by the quality of precise data via drawing and measurements was a step into a new dimension of transporting ancient Greek architectural forms through time and space. Stuart and Revett’s three volumes were significantly more expensive than the various editions of Le Roy’s work, but they did find their way to American architects – as is documented by their libraries, and the extant buildings themselves. In the end, Stuart and Revett’s publication influenced American building far more thoroughly than any other work. This applies not only to the rather accurate copies of Greek architecture (as, for instance, Strickland’s Second Bank of the United States, dealt with above), but also to the majority of free variations on

⁶⁶ Höcker 1997. The degree to which this fact is granted impact on American architecture goes along with the general evaluation on French influence on the American Greek revival. To my knowledge, this was rather minimal, aside from Thomas Jefferson’s rather “Roman-based” introduction of ancient architectural design into American building. For this aspect, see Schneider 2003.

⁶⁷ J. Stuart & N. Revett: *The Antiquities of Athens Measured and Delineated*. 3 vols. (London 1762-1794).

Greek models. Even for these, the use of Stuart and Revett's documentation based on fundamental research on the spot seemed more apt than the French predecessors.⁶⁸

All this, however, makes up only half of the process, at best. Firstly, this was by no means a continuous flow of transmission. On the contrary, the specific forms of classical Greek – that is 5th century BC – Doric and Ionic columns and capitals – these architectural orders had been totally forgotten for 18 centuries! They had vanished in architecture already during the Roman empire, they do not reappear in Byzantium nor in the middle ages of western Europe and were even not revived in the renaissance. It was not before the end of the 18th century that they suddenly began their voyage from Greece to the west and north. Truly, this was a geographical journey they made, but through time? “Facts” of the 5th and 4th century certainly reached modern times, but it was only after a long sleep that they set out for their journey through time.

But even taking into account this gap of time, the description of the process remains far from complete. How can “facts” sleep and then wake up? “Facts,” even in their metaphoric sense, are unable to act in that way, or in any way. In the beginning, it was contemporary interests, ideas, and preferences that led members of the English Society of Dilettanti and other voyagers to faraway Greece, and there let them select what they selected as worth copying or taking back to their home countries.

The same applies to the further travel of our “facts” from western Europe to America. Here again it was contemporary – now specifically American – attitudes and preferences that led entrepreneurs, architects, and craftsmen to draw freely on the forms found in architectural books, creating a wild and decidedly non-archaeological “Greek revival.” And never mind the subsequent reinterpretations of these forms, which in

⁶⁸ See note 66.

Ancient Greece had never been seen as symbols of nature or of freedom, and certainly not as symbols of a supposedly transcultural and all-embracing humanity. But it was not just a new meaning and new functions which were superimposed on old forms, it was the decision of what is a “fact” at all – and what is a “fact” being worth of transport and transplantation – that enacted and determined the further travel of our architectural forms. So all this was provoked and determined by American modern ambitions and attitudes.

Both the distant view and the scrutinizing close view appear worth undertaking. The distant look lets us perceive “facts” travel from one region to another and through times: sometimes comfortably and continuously, sometimes erratically – more like an Odyssean voyage. As soon as you look at the same processes in detail, however, “facts” which before seemed to travel to us from distant regions and distant times, will eventually vanish. The acts or movements in our case then turn out to have been rather directed backwards, from a respective present to a far away past. Furthermore, it was not one continuous move, it was a whole bundle of acts of retrieving and reactivating these distant “facts.” True enough, the eventual modern revival of ancient forms which resulted from these activities was vigorous and thus has induced historians to see true tradition here. But this impact never depended on authenticity. Aside from the fact that the venerated Greek past was a highly selective one, even the single formal elements were not required to be truly Greek at all. They had simply to be *considered* Greek, and they had to fit the needs and ambitions of a particular 19th century society.

The past always has been and will remain, to a large extent, an invention of the present. Within this creative act of reconstructing a past, single elements of times ago may well be transported to the present. They cannot act themselves, however. Present actors decide which of them is given access to the boat; and present actors decide what is

done to them on their long and unsafe travel. When we refer to a voyager, we admit that the person at the end of a journey is not exactly the same as that at the beginning, but still somewhat the same. The same must apply to travelling “facts.” Within the frame of my case study, they do seem to exist. They have by no means totally changed their appearance during their journey. They do not, however, form something like a coherent “tradition.” Rather, are they to be considered as elements of a “memoria”: a contemporary set of paradigmatic models created by drawing back on selected past entities, whether existent in antiquity or not.

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