

Reuse Value

*Spolia and Appropriation in
Art and Architecture from
Constantine to Sherrie Levine*

An **Ashgate** Book

Edited by
**RICHARD BRILLIANT
AND DALE KINNEY**

REUSE VALUE

This book offers a range of views on *spolia* and appropriation in art and architecture from fourth-century Rome to the late twentieth century. Using case studies from different historical moments and cultures, contributors test the limits of *spolia* as a critical category and seek to define its specific character in relation to other forms of artistic appropriation. Several authors explore the ethical issues raised by spoliation and their implications for the evaluation and interpretation of new work made with *spolia*.

The contemporary fascination with *spolia* is part of a larger cultural preoccupation with reuse, recycling, appropriation and re-presentation in the Western world. All of these practices speak to a desire to make use of pre-existing artifacts (objects, images, expressions) for contemporary purposes. Several essays in this volume focus on the distinction between *spolia* and other forms of reused objects. While some authors prefer to elide such distinctions, others insist that *spolia* entail some form of taking, often violent, and a diminution of the source from which they are removed.

The book opens with an essay by the scholar most responsible for the popularity of *spolia* studies in the later twentieth century, Arnold Esch, whose seminal article "Spolien" was published in 1969. Subsequent essays treat late Roman antiquity, the eastern Mediterranean and the Western Middle Ages, medieval and modern attitudes to *spolia* in southern Asia, the Italian Renaissance, the European Enlightenment, modern America, and contemporary architecture and visual culture.

Richard Brilliant is Professor of Art History & Archaeology and Anna S. Garbedian Professor in the Humanities Emeritus at Columbia University, USA; and Dale Kinney is Eugenia Chase Guild Professor in the Humanities Emeritus at Bryn Mawr College, USA.



Robert Rauschenberg, *Erased de Kooning Drawing*, 1953, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (Art © Estate of Robert Rauschenberg/Licensed by VAGA, New York,

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Acknowledgments

This volume originated in a colloquium organized by the editors and hosted by the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute in December 2006, titled “The Mirror of *Spolia*: Premodern Practice and Postmodern Theory”. The goal of the colloquium, which brought together eight scholars known for their work on *spolia*, reuse, recycling, or appropriation, in diverse eras and cultures, was to probe the apparent parallels between the use of *spolia* in premodern art and architecture and the various modes of appropriation theorized and practiced in modern and contemporary art. Over two days of highly focused, sometimes tense, and ultimately exhilarating discussion, we found that while final agreement on the nature and the validity of these parallels eluded us, the very fact that the conversation was so animated proved the project’s potential, and merited its continuation in print. This volume expands the range of the original encounter with the addition of six essays that represent additional epochs and points of view. We hope to show that the study of *spolia* can indeed be enriched by enlarging its critical horizons, and that history is not lacking for the art of our own time.

We would like to thank the participants in the colloquium for a brilliant two days, which inform this publication even if it cannot reproduce their convivial spontaneity: Leonard Barkan, Mary Beard, Barry Flood, Donald Kuspit, Paolo Liverani, and Annabel Wharton. We were fortunate to be joined occasionally by Clark Fellows Heinrich Dilly, Serge Guilbault, Ann Reynolds, and Ernst von Alphen; by the Director of the Clark Art Institute, Michael Conforti; by Michael Ann Holly, Starr Director of Research and Academic Program, and by Herbert Kessler, Michael Koortbojian, Mark Ledbury, Elizabeth Marlowe, and Keith Moxey. We are grateful to the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute for providing such an accommodating atmosphere for the stimulating free-wheeling debates of that memorable weekend.

Richard Brilliant
Dale Kinney

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Introduction

Dale Kinney

Just over 40 years ago, the *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* published an essay by a young German historian that opened up a new field of study.¹ *Spolia*, then generally defined (as in the subtitle of the article) as reused architectural components and sculptures from Greco-Roman antiquity, were not unknown. They had been part of the discourse of art history since the sixteenth century, when Roman artists and humanists spotted them as a sign of artistic decline in late antiquity, and in the twentieth century they were included in studies of the “afterlife” of classical art and culture. The historian, however, was inclined to privilege endpoints – the new products created with *spolia* – rather than origins, and the effect of Arnold Esch’s scintillating essay was to shift the emphasis from the afterlife of classical antiquity (with its implication of death) to reuse as a form of new life, with different modalities and myriad inventive outcomes: “the building as *spolium*”, “the supplemented *spolium*”, “the imitated *spolium*”, “the statue: recognized, destroyed, silenced, elevated, assimilated”.

The publication of Esch’s article coincided with the constellation of trends termed “postmodernism” in art and architecture.² The coincidence was fortuitous, as many of the tropes and strategies of postmodernism are also characteristic of *spolia*: fragmentation, historicism, memory, authenticity, authorship, and appropriation, to name only a few. Against the background of postmodern critical discourse *spolia* studies have ballooned in the past 30 years, yet direct acknowledgments of this connection are surprisingly rare. Relatively few studies of *spolia* draw on the language and concepts of postmodern theory, and even fewer critics of contemporary art and architecture are aware of the historical precedent of *spolia*. This volume

1 Esch, “Spolien”.

2 Foster, “The ‘Primitive’ Unconscious of Modern Art”, p. xiv.

addresses that gap, offering a spectrum of positions on how, if, or whether it should be bridged.

Richard Brilliant's aphoristic distinction between *spolia in se* and *spolia in re* expanded the field of *spolia* from material (*in se*) to virtual (*in re*) objects.³ Although Brilliant coined the phrase specifically to describe the "reuse" of an older style in third-century Roman reliefs, *spolia in re* invites application to other forms of non-physical taking-over, such as quotation and reproduction.⁴ Paolo Liverani teases out the implications of such an extension in Chapter 2. Whereas *spolia in se* might be compared to the components of assemblage and collage (and vice versa), *spolia in re* would be verbal and visual formulas, images and motifs. Donald Kuspit's reflections on appropriation art (Chapter 12) imply that at least some of the objects of this signature postmodern practice might be thought of as *spolia*. But first things first: what are *spolia*, and how do they entail reuse?

Reuse

Reuse is ubiquitous and usually unremarkable. In the physical realm, the reuse of materials and artifacts is routine in pre- or non-industrial economies that generate little surplus and cannot afford waste. In cultural economies, the reuse of melodies, stories, images, symbols, and other abstract forms of expression creates an aura of familiarity and provides a common store of self-identifying topoi or emblems that foster cultural cohesion. In such forms and circumstances, reuse can be unmarked and morally neutral.

In other circumstances, reuse emerges as value-laden. For example, in the context of the prolific production and consumption of commodities in mid-twentieth-century America, the reuse of consumer products was negatively charged with implications of backwardness and social marginality. New products made of newly manufactured materials were promoted as more efficient, cleaner, safer, and more aesthetically appealing. If the discarded products of this and other hyper-productive societies were reused, it was elsewhere, on their own impoverished peripheries or in the so-called Third World. By the end of the century, however, concern for managing the waste created by the constant replacement of once-new products by ever newer ones was reversing the negative charge on reuse and investing it instead with positive moral value. Yet because the "psychology of abundance" that accompanied the earlier "throwaway spirit" is still prevalent, reuse is

3 Brilliant, "I piedistalli del giardino di Boboli".

4 Cf. Sumi, "Poetry and Architecture".

noticeably non-conformist, exceptional, and ideological, rather than systemic and neutral.⁵

Suppliers of reusable building materials valorize not only reuse itself, as a provident, waste-reducing practice, but also its objects: hardware “that can’t be replicated”, “tremendous, beautiful old wood”.⁶ The medieval voices quoted by Arnold Esch (Chapter 1) express a similar appreciation for finely cut ancient stone, and the marble columns and other architectural elements discussed by Hugo Brandenburg and Michael Greenhalgh (Chapters 3 and 4) elicited the same admiration. Whether the practice of reuse was ideologically charged in the period of their inquiries, the Middle Ages, is an open question. Our own interpretations of reuse are likely to be colored by the psychology of abundance rather than the “psychology of scarcity” that was doubtless more typical of the Middle Ages, and in which reuse appears unavoidable and banal.⁷ Yet the objects of reuse might have commanded attention on other terms. Elements “that can’t be replicated”, be they doorknobs or marble column shafts, announce their origin in a different context from the one into which they have been (re)built. The reuse of time-bound pieces exposes history, and the presence of multiple such elements creates “palimpsests of an historical process” (Esch) that may be the deliberate product of reuse, or only its unintended effect. The self-conscious, programmatic displays of history in the buildings analyzed here by Hans-Rudolf Meier (Chapter 11) may represent an extreme of the historicizing potential of reuse, but “recycling always implies a stance toward time”.⁸

Reuse also implies use; by definition, the objects of reuse are “used”. Reuse is transformative but ultimately diminishing, as illustrated by Umberto Eco’s example of a jacket.⁹ In its initial use, a cloth jacket becomes “worn”, after which it can be reused by reversing it, then by mending it, patching it, and finally by changing its shape and function through shortening or refashioning it. Ultimately, its use as a garment is exhausted, but it can still be dismembered and repurposed to make patches for other garments or braided rugs. Strictly speaking, the last phase constitutes recycling rather than reuse: form and function are obliterated, and the object is reduced to its material.

Reuse thus applies to *spolia* only insofar as the latter are objects of use. This is arguably not the case with most *spolia in re*, nor is it true of works of art, which are notoriously useless. Marcel Duchamp’s perverse impulse to “Use a Rembrandt as an Ironing Board” brilliantly sums up “the basic antimony between art and Ready-mades” and indeed, between art and nearly

5 “Psychology of abundance”: Fine, *The World of Consumption*, p. 114; “throwaway spirit”: Packard, *The Waste Makers*.

6 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGMd7k_dmJA; accessed 29 September 2010.

7 Fine, *The World of Consumption*, p. 114.

8 Seriff, “Introduction”, p. 10.

9 Eco, “Riflessioni sulle tecniche di citazione”.

everything else.¹⁰ In the case of artworks (unlike, for example, Eco's jacket), "use" must be distinguished from function. A painting can function in the service of cult (as an icon or altarpiece), for commemoration (as a portrait), as a prestige good, or in other capacities, but such functions do not diminish or deplete its utility. On the contrary, intensive exercise of function tends to increase the artwork's capacity for more of the same: the longer a painting serves to enhance prestige, the more prestige it can confer.

If artworks are not used they cannot be reused. How then should we describe the physical incorporation or "re-staging" of older artworks that characterizes nearly every artistic tradition except the classical tradition in the West? Sometimes, in the often surprising employment of art from other cultures in the sectarian contexts of the Christian and Muslim Middle Ages (Kinney, Chapter 5; Flood, Chapter 6), we might describe it as "use": a previously autonomous object has been put to work in the service of another composition or idea, as a sculptor "uses" wood or stone blocks.¹¹ In other cases, the re-staging might be compared to the self-conscious appropriations of western industrial discards by folk artists, for which many scholars prefer the term "recycling".¹² In yet other instances, re-staged artworks might reflect military spoliation, and are therefore properly *spolia*.

Spoliation

Spoliation entails a forcible transfer of ownership. The spoliated object (animal, person, monument, or culture) is denuded of its portable assets (skin, wealth, ornament, artistic patrimony) and the assets – the *spolia* – are taken as booty or salvaged. *Spolia* are survivors of violence, about which they might be mute (if they bear no visible signs of it) or eloquent. The burden of testimony rests largely with the spoliated object, if it survives to bear witness. For example, after the Romans conquered the city of Ambracia in 189 BCE, its statues were taken intact to Rome while Ambracia was left with "bare walls and door-posts" as a painful memento of its defeat.¹³ Recontextualized in the city of the victor, statues and other military *spolia* became elements of Rome's display of world domination.¹⁴ They were also seeds of discord and envy, however, and as signifiers they were equivocal, capable of standing for the transience of power as well as its accumulation, and of reproaching later

10 Schwarz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, p. 46.

11 Cf. Foster, "The 'Primitive' Unconscious of Modern Art", p. 49.

12 For example, Cerny and Seriff (eds), *Recycled Re-Seen*.

13 Kinney, "*Spolia*", p. 120.

14 Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, pp. 143–86.

owners as unworthy of the glory they embodied.¹⁵ Cicero imagined Mark Antony haunted by the *spolia* in the vestibule of the house of Pompey (d. 48 BCE) because they represented the “matchless man” who had deservedly won them, not Antony himself.¹⁶

The violence encoded by *spolia* tends to be elided in the metaphorical extension of the term to all recontextualized objects and works of art. For different reasons, many of the authors in this volume consider the elision a mistake. Wharton (Chapter 9) objects that it masks the wounds inflicted on the bodies of donor buildings. Rajagopalan (Chapter 10) demonstrates that objects that appear to be *spolia* intimate a history of violence whether the history is true or not. Brandenburg (Chapter 3) insists on the distinction between architectural elements ripped from intact buildings – *spolia* – and surplus or salvaged inventory as a matter of historical precision. It is the difference between seeing the Arch of Constantine (Figures 8.1 and 8.2) as the product of the deliberate defacement of earlier imperial monuments and seeing it as the routine assemblage of reusable parts taken from storage.

Roman law prohibited architectural spoliation because it produced “disfigured” buildings that were an affront to urban decorum.¹⁷ By contrast, modern US law defines the “distortion, mutilation, or other modification” of art-adorned buildings as a potential infringement on the artist’s rights of authorship.¹⁸ Here the aesthetics of the building are not at issue; it is the “honor or reputation” of the author of an artwork that is part of a building (such as a mural painting), which can be damaged by the work’s destruction or unauthorized alteration.¹⁹ The violence done to the work is implicitly considered to extend to the artist as well.²⁰

Although the taking of *spolia in re* does not harm their original context – on the contrary, as shown here by Liverani, “metaphorical” taking by citation leaves the primary context intact and tends to elevate its stature – it can involve theft of authorship. Plagiarism is the limit case in which quotation turns from

15 Miles, *Art as Plunder*, pp. 13–104, gives a comprehensive account of Greek and Roman ambivalence concerning *spolia*.

16 Cicero, *Philippics* II.xxviii, trans. Ker, p. 131.

17 Mommsen and Meyer (eds), *Theodosiani Libri* XVI, p. 805 No. XV.1.19; Geyer “Ne ruinas urbs deformetur”; Alchermes, “*Spolia* in Roman Cities of the Late Empire”.

18 United States Code, Title 17, Sections 106A and 113 (Visual Artists Rights Act): <http://www.sfartscommission.org/pubartcollection/documents/pa05-mural-guidelines/pa05-2-visual-artists-rights-act/> (accessed 30 September 2010). I am grateful to Lisa Kohn for bringing this law to my attention.

19 The provisions of VARA reflect the European concept of the author’s “moral rights”, which are enshrined in various national laws and in the Berne Convention of 1886: http://www.wipo.int/treaties/en/ip/berne/trtdocs_wo001.html#P85_10661 (accessed 30 September 2010).

20 Under the law, the muralist Kent Twitchell was awarded a settlement of \$1.1 million after his *Ed Ruscha Monument* on the wall of a federal government building was painted over without his consent in 2006.

the respectful ascription of authority into plunder. By usurping authorship, the plagiarist steals intellectual property from the author and diminishes what some might call the author's symbolic capital: "if 'D' plagiarizes 'V's' work – instead of D citing V's work [that is, naming V as the author] – then V is potentially harmed by having fewer citations to V's work."²¹ Virtual violence can have material effects: as V's reputation suffers so does his or her capacity to earn royalties and fees; such is the monetization of honor in capitalist economies. This is a strictly modern scenario; in other economies, the usurpation of honor or reputation can be theft in itself. This is one of the possibilities raised by the appropriated imagery on the Arch of Constantine and by Kuspit's opening example of the statues of other pharaohs reinscribed with the name of Ramses II.

The military spoliation gladly practiced by Rome and other imperial powers down to Napoleon in the nineteenth century and the generals of the Third Reich in the twentieth is now forbidden. A turning point occurred in 1815 when the Duke of Wellington determined that, like the ancient Ambracians, the defeated nation of Napoleon should be left with the bare walls of the Louvre as a "moral lesson", but its art spoils should be returned to the nations from which they were taken rather than redistributed to the palaces and museums of the victors.²² Today, following the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict "the seizure of [cultural] properties as trophies" is prohibited. *Spolia* have become an embarrassment, as nations and their cultural institutions struggle with the identification of *spolia* in their possession and the obligation to make restitution.²³

The UNESCO Convention of 1970 extended the protection of cultural property to peacetime, declaring the obligation of nations to protect such property from "illicit import, export or transfer of ownership".²⁴ The identification of cultural property, originally conceived as objects of value to all humans, with the "cultural heritage" of modern nation-states may be of debatable utility, as demonstrated notoriously by the "Sevso treasure", but

21 <http://www.checkforplagiarism.net/component/content/article/101-plagiarism-law.html> (accessed 30 September 2010).

22 Miles, *Art as Plunder*, pp. 329–48; quotation from the Duke of Wellington on p. 334.

23 http://www.aam-us.org/museumresources/ethics/upload/ethicsguidelines_naziera.pdf; <http://www.ago.net/provenance-research-project> (accessed 30 September 2010); Scott, "Spoliation", quotation on p. 869 n. 232.

24 <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001140/114046e.pdf#page=130> (accessed 30 September 2010), pp. 135–41. "Cultural property" includes such things as rare specimens of flora and fauna, products of archaeological excavations, elements of dismembered artistic or historical monuments, coins and seals more than 100 years old, "property of artistic interest" including paintings, drawings, statues, assemblages and montages, rare manuscripts and incunabula, archives, and old furniture and musical instruments.

whatever its merits, the logic of this position entails a notion of collective authorship (“property created by the individual or collective genius of nationals of the State”) that is something like the generalized conception of antiquity espoused by the sixteenth-century artists and scholars who first applied the term “*spolia*” to art and architecture (Koortbojian, Chapter 7).²⁵ A document from the circle of Raphael attributes the grandeur of ancient Rome to the “divine gifts [dwelling] in the hearts of the men of ancient times”, a kind of national genius that was extinguished by time and foreign invaders: “the Goths, the Vandals, and other perfidious enemies of the Latin name”. Their depredations left the noble works of the ancients “so wretchedly wounded as to be almost a corpse”; “the skeleton ... without [its] ornament – the bones of the body without the flesh”.²⁶

To these sixteenth-century authors, the reuse of materials was a sign of the miserable existence, “without art”, of Romans in the post-classical Dark Ages: “They stripped the ancient walls to obtain bricks, broke marble into little squares, and with a mixture of these squares and the bricks they built their walls ...”. The *spolia* on the Arch of Constantine were proof of the Romans’ decline over time and a reproof for their diminished capabilities: “The sculptures on the ... arch are very tasteless, without art or good design, though the fragments (*spoglie*) from the time of Trajan and Antoninus Pius are excellent and of the purest style.”²⁷ Although the use of the word “*spolia*” implies a negative moral judgment on the builders, the resetting of the antique reliefs was not considered to have changed them. They remained autonomous elements within a heterogeneous compilation. It was only in the twentieth century, with the observation that the heads of the second-century emperors were recarved when the reliefs were reset in the arch, that the earlier pieces came to be seen as fourth-century appropriations, “radically reinterpreted according to the concepts of the new age and made to correspond with the late antique parts by means of new combinations”.²⁸

Appropriation

Spoliation is a form of appropriation (Brilliant, Chapter 8) distinguished by forcible dispossession and/or material deprivation of the donor object or person. It bears the ethical or moral value assigned to such acts in any given era

25 Miles, *Art as Plunder*, pp. 297–302 on the origin of cultural property law; Merryman, “Thinking about the Sevso Treasure”; <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001140/114046e.pdf#page=130>, Article 4(a), p. 137.

26 “A Report to Pope Leo X”, pp. 290–91.

27 “A Report to Pope Leo X”, p. 294.

28 L’Orange, *Der spätantike Bildschmuck des Konstantinsbogens*, pp. 190–91.

or culture. In today's world, it is considered "misappropriation",²⁹ a category that includes embezzlement and extortion. By implication, appropriation itself is legitimate. Most *spolia in re* are probably better understood as appropriation than as spoliation.

Appropriation is fundamental to human existence and as such, it is essentially neutral.³⁰ As with reuse, particular acts or practices of appropriation can acquire positive or negative charge according to circumstances. Often the charge is political, and in contemporary discourse it is frequently determined by the direction of the appropriation in relation to perceived distributions of power. Appropriation of tribal or "primitive" art forms by western cultural institutions generates a strong negative charge, for example, while the appropriation of western industrial artifacts or "post-consumer items" by artisans on the cultural or economic margins is seen as positive.³¹

Appropriation is a common political strategy for asserting "fictive continuities" (Flood, Chapter 6) that may be lateral – within or between cultures – or vertical, between the present and cultures or values of the past. The strategy of vertical appropriation assumes that the appropriated object (or sign) transfers the desired history or value to the appropriator, but as Nelson points out, appropriation can be "defeated" by an audience that sees only the prior stages of signification (as sixteenth-century artists saw only reliefs of second-century emperors on the Arch of Constantine). The re-photographs by canonical twentieth-century appropriation artists like Sherrie Levine seemed to turn the strategy of vertical appropriation on its head. Rosalind Krauss understood Levine's "pirated prints" as pointers to "a gulf that in turn establishes an historical divide" existing between Levine and the myths of origin, originality, and authorship adhering to the photographs she copied and re-presented.³² Of course, the claim of discontinuity may be as "fictive" as the continuities discussed by Flood.³³

Late twentieth-century appropriation art represents the practice at its most naked and is an atypical extreme. Unlike the general habit of appropriation, it called attention to itself by testing the limits of permissible taking. Jeff Koons was sued by the photographer Art Rogers in 1989 for making three-dimensional replicas of Rogers' photograph *Puppies*, which Koons claimed to regard as a banal mass-culture image "resting in the collective sub-consciousness of people regardless of whether [it] had actually ever been seen by such people".³⁴ The court found in favor of Rogers, determining that "'Puppies'

29 Scott, "Spoliation", p. 816.

30 Nelson, "Appropriation", pp. 164–5; Schneider, "On 'Appropriation'", p. 217.

31 Contrast Foster, "The 'Primitive' Unconscious of Modern Art", with the essays in Cerny and Seriff (eds), *Recycled Re-Seen*.

32 Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde", p. 170.

33 Welchman, "Introduction"; cf. Foster (ed.), *The Anti-Aesthetic*, p. xvi.

34 <http://www.ncac.org/art-law/op-rog.cfm> (accessed 30 September 2010).

is the product of plaintiff's artistic creation" and that Koons' unauthorized copy of it had brought monetary profit to Koons without compensation to the original creator.³⁵ In the eyes of the law, Koons' appropriation of the photograph was spoliation. By contrast, Levine's re-photographs might be considered quotations, since the author is cited, even if effectively denied.

Spoliation destroys the original context; quotation leaves it intact but also suppresses it by excerpting words/images/objects for (re)use: "There is ... always a violence implied in appropriation; and the violence of the cut is always accompanied by the aggravated wound of separation."³⁶ Levine's ironic quotations cut the bond between image and author by claiming a position "after" the author, in which his *oeuvre* has dissolved into universal availability. Robert Rauschenberg's erasure of a drawing by Willem de Kooning (frontispiece) seems, by comparison, almost a modernist homage. It might be compared to the erasure of the second-century portraits on the Arch of Constantine, effected so that a fourth-century emperor could take their place. In neither case is the erasure complete. The drawing Rauschenberg acquired contained "charcoal, lead, everything. It took me two months and even then it wasn't completely erased. I wore out a lot of erasers."³⁷ Appropriation is a two-way engagement between aspirant and object, and sometimes the object resists.

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35 <http://www.ncac.org/art-law/op-rog.cfm> (accessed 30 September 2010); cf. <http://www.designobserver.com/observatory/entry.html?entry=6467>.

36 Welchman, "Introduction", p. 24.

37 Quoted in Stevens and Swan, *De Kooning*, p. 360.

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On the Reuse of Antiquity: The Perspectives of the Archaeologist and of the Historian

Arnold Esch

For a long time the subject of *spolia* was barely addressed. It was not that *spolia* were not noticed, but they were not deemed worthy of scholarly treatment. More precisely, attention was bestowed upon the spoliated ancient piece itself, but not upon its inclusion in a new, post-antique context; if the latter was observed at all, it was only polemically. For humanists the use of *spolia* was a damnable dismemberment and abasement of Antiquity; for the Church of the Counter-Reformation it was a damnable homage to paganism, and for the art historian it was, for a long time, a regrettable indication of the lack of individual creativity. Jacob Burckhardt still viewed it as such in his *Cicerone*.

Today these approaches have been superseded. Research into *spolia* has gained momentum since the 1950s, and since the 1980s it has increased at an almost explosive rate.¹ At first, interest was devoted primarily to the reuse of structural elements in late antique and early Christian architecture, to the connection between the use of *spolia* and the imitation of Antiquity in the art of the high Middle Ages, and to the use (and imitation) of ancient gems in the medieval minor arts.² Then the theme broke out of specialist circles, and the area of investigation was expanded – geographically, chronologically, and in terms of subject matter – through numerous case studies. Scholars analyzed the provenance and choice of *spolia*, inquired about the motives for the use of *spolia*, and introduced political-“ideological”, liturgical, and legal questions; they went further back into Antiquity and forward beyond the Middle Ages, attended to Byzantine *spolia* in Islamic architecture, and expanded the mineralogical understanding of objects through isotopic analyses; they

1 Kinney, “The Concept of Spolia”, provides a good overview of the development of research on spolia.

2 Of particular note are the works by Deichmann, Adhémar, Hamann-MacLean, Deér, Wentzel, Wegner, and Noehles, not to speak of more specialized studies.

addressed not only the role of decorated pieces as stylistic models and the degree of their appropriation, but also purely material recycling, such as the reuse of ancient bricks, and even the imitation of *opus reticulatum*.

Various disciplines have participated in this research, for “reuse” is by definition a subject that lies *between* disciplines. When reused, the treasure administered by classical archaeology falls under the aegis of others: historians and art historians. The transition from one field to another is fluid, and indeed was initially perceived as producing a “no-man’s-land between archaeology and art history”,³ which was entered only with hesitation. It is therefore all the more important to state precisely the role played by the various approaches and where the specific strengths of these different disciplines lie when they engage with the subject.

To begin, these disciplines direct their gazes in different directions. For the archaeologist, the *spolium* is a piece that was *removed* from Antiquity, whereas for the historian and the art historian (whose positions in this regard are quite close, and will thus not always be distinguished in the following remarks) the same piece was *received* from Antiquity. This leads to diverse methods and ways of posing the question.⁴ The archaeologist is inclined to bring the *spolium* back to its original home, as it were, and once more to complete the ancient monument that was “damaged” through spoliation. Art historians and historians, on the other hand, take an interest just in the new contexts and ask in what sense the use of *spolia* was actually the “appropriation” of Antiquity, or simple recycling, or something else altogether. For the removal from the original ancient context was as a rule complete. Removal destroyed the ancient context, so the spoliated piece had to find a new meaning, a new significance in a new context.

When one surveys the entire spectrum of reuse, it becomes clear that various perspectives are required in order to grasp and to penetrate the phenomenon of *spolia*.⁵ For, to name only the extremes, it reaches from the conversion of entire buildings to the pulverization of ancient sculptures for the production of lime.

The conversion of whole buildings is of equal interest to the archaeologist and to the historian. Simply by walling up its arcades, an ancient theater can be turned into a most beautiful and secure urban palace, and the family that occupied it is often known to the historian. Even a triumphal arch can be inhabited. But the different types of architecture have differing conversion-values: that of the temple is rather slight, not so much because it embodied the pagan in a particular fashion (in this respect the West had less fear of contagion than the fanatical East), but because its cella was conceived only for the divinity

3 Settis, “Les remplois”, p. 67.

4 On the various approaches see Esch, *Wiederverwendung*, with bibliography.

5 For an overview of the entire spectrum of reuse: Greenhalgh, *Survival*; Esch, “Spolien”. On the various perceptions of *spolia* or reuse from late antiquity until the Renaissance, see Kinney, “*Spolia*”.

and priests, and did not offer enough room for a Christian community.⁶ Baths, on the other hand, had a relatively good chance of being reused, because they offered an entire sequence of configurations that were conceived as space and so could be reused as space. New uses preserve; only what later eras can appropriate has a chance of survival. This is still true today, incidentally: while musealization may preserve an abandoned building for a generation, conversion maintains it in perpetuity. Thus a typology of reusability and functional potential is simultaneously a typology of survival prospects.

A step away from the reuse of whole buildings is the reuse of architectural pieces. In the early Middle Ages, the spoliated pieces were often put together crudely, without any feeling for proportions or harmony, rather as a child might pile his building blocks one atop the other. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, on the other hand, reuse was discriminating and sophisticated. Greater attention was paid to quality, suitable dimensions, and the uniformity of ancient materials: in the interior, matching capitals, and on the exterior, on the portal, presentable cornices. If the *spolium* was not long enough, it was occasionally supplemented, and its cymatia extended by a faithful imitation (Fig. 1.1). (This immediately raises the question to what degree the appearance of the *spolia* might have affected the style of contemporary sculptors.) There was a precision in the use of *spolia*, in the sense that they were not situated haphazardly but at points of emphasis: on the portal, the apse, or the campanile.⁷

These architectural elements were not simply picked up *in loco* from the nearest ruin; they were also procured at great distances. This is an important consideration, because it illuminates pretensions to quality and choice in the reuse of Antiquity. Some patrons did not want just any *spolia*; they had to be *spolia* from Rome. Some wanted porphyry columns, which were not so easy to find in their own surroundings. From the high cost of transport we can determine how much these elements were worth to them. While the archaeologist learns the provenance of *spolia* from stylistic features and their exact dimensions (and in this way finds pieces of the *macellum* of Pozzuoli in the cathedral of Salerno, or elements from Rome in the cathedral of Pisa),⁸ the trade in ancient pieces and their transport can also be followed in written sources: in literary texts (for example, by Suger of St-Denis, who desired

6 Deichmann, "Frühchristliche Kirchen"; on the reuse of entire buildings, Cantino Wataghin, "*ut haec aedes*", and most recently Clemens, *Tempore Romanorum constructa*.

7 On the phases of *spolia* use, see the monograph by de Lachenal, *Spolia*; the contributions to the three volumes edited by Settis, *Memoria dell'antico*; Poeschke, *Antike Spolien*, and Bernard et al., *Il Reimpiego in architettura*. For a quick overview see Settis, *Sopravvivenza*; for *spolia* in Islamic architecture, see Greenhalgh, *Marble Past*.

8 Pisa: Tedeschi Grisanti, "Il fregio con delfini"; Tedeschi Grisanti, "Il reimpiego"; Parra, "Rimeditando sul reimpiego"; Salerno: Wegner, "Spolien-Miszellen", pp. 6–7; Pensabene, "Contributo per una ricerca", pp. 16–23.



Fig. 1.1 Bevagna, San Michele, door jamb with imitation of antique cymatium: ovolo, Lesbian cyma, bead-and-reel, from which other ornaments develop

Roman *spolia*⁹), but also in documents with which the historian is more conversant, such as contracts, account books, and customs registers.

Thus while the archaeologist will once more (in his imagination) bring the kidnapped pieces back to their original location and reintegrate them into an ancient monument, the historian is intrigued precisely by their distance, spatial and conceptual, from their original site and function. Why did the *spolia* have to come from Rome, and not, more conveniently, from the immediate vicinity? Why transport a colossal ancient column at great cost, instead of building a Romanesque pier? Why claim that Venice was built entirely from the stones of Troy? For the historian, omnivore that he is, even this curious *spolia*-legend is important, because it leads him deep into the foundation myths of Italian cities.

Architectural elements were not only reused in structural contexts, but also as isolated decorative pieces.¹⁰ The capital was not only reused analogously, as a capital, but also, hollowed out, as a baptismal font or a stoup, as a reliquary, or as a fountain. Hollowed out, the column shaft became a saint's tomb or a bishop's throne; in Crusader castles, multiple columns are packed so tightly against one another that their flutings interlock like cogwheels. The sarcophagus was used not only as a sarcophagus, but also as a reliquary (and in this fashion often as the base of an altar), as the trough of a fountain, and so on. The Middle Ages always looked upon antiquities with a gaze that was at once admiring and also exploitative.

Thus, in the reuse of the rich legacy of Antiquity, imagination knew no bounds. The plenitude of ancient pieces and new functions makes it necessary to consider them from various perspectives. The archaeologist, for example, might inquire after the range of pieces, the art historian after their new placement, and the historian after the motives for reuse, each employing his unique and specific approach and competency, but in such a way that, in the end, the results can be patched together to create a whole.

In any case, reuse transforms the ancient piece from an antiquarian object into an historical one, which must therefore be understood historically. If a *spolium* were liberated from a medieval church and brought into a museum, it would no longer be a *spolium*, but would return to the exclusive purview of the archaeologist; it would no longer belong to the "afterlife" of Antiquity. For reuse grants life, both in the sense of survival (an individual capital that is not reused will perish) and in the sense of afterlife. Reused, Antiquity lives on, assimilated into a new context; it continues to speak to people, and continues to exert its agency.

This has not always been acknowledged. Encountering *spolia*, some archaeologists felt anger and scorn for such uncomprehending and insolent

9 Brenk, "Sugers Spolien".

10 For examples see n. 5; for sarcophagi, Andreae and Settis, *Colloquio sul reimpiego*.



Fig. 1.2 Paros, Venetian *kastro*, the bastion under the chapel



Fig. 1.3 Civita Castellana, pieces of a Roman tomb reused in the arch of Rodrigo Borgia (the future Pope Alessandro VI)

appropriation of Antiquity by the Middle Ages, and perhaps a few of them itched to roll back the historical process, to tear down *spolia*-churches and to produce Antiquity once more. In fact, it would not be difficult to rebuild the Temple of Athena by disassembling the Venetian *kastro* of Paros, an orgy of *spolia* (Fig. 1.2), or to rebuild the ancient funerary monument now integrated into the triumphal arch built for Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia in Civita Castellana (Fig. 1.3).

In the eighteenth century, Giovanni Lodovico Bianconi wrote of the cathedral of Pisa and its many *spolia*: “*Son persuaso che se si demolisse questo gran tempio, vi si scoprirebbero infinite anticaglie condannate qui dalla barbarie ad una perpetua notte*” (“I am convinced that if this great church were demolished, an infinite number of antiquities would be uncovered, which are here condemned by the barbarism [of the Middle Ages] to a perpetual night”).¹¹

No. The reuse of Antiquity in the Middle Ages is not “perpetua notte”; it is not death but rather new life, new agency, a new adventure. The ancient sarcophagus converted into a fountain is not the death of Antiquity but its survival. The marble lion ridden to a shine by children; the ancient *putto* worn by the hands of pious women, who believe it to be an angel; the bench fitted together out of *spolia* for the Homeric *teichoskopia*, the old folks’ look-out from the wall of a small Italian city; the Roman milestone in the open landscape used as a bulletin board for local football games and saints’ days: these are all *life*.

¹¹ Tolaini, p. 3.

Archaeologists know this too. Indeed, it was not only art historians but archaeologists – those who were endowed with a historical sensibility – who initiated research into *spolia* and carried it forward. Nevertheless, the difference in approaches should not be trivialized. Archaeologists' handling of post-antique transformations, of the historical ensemble, was for a long time not very circumspect. It was not long ago that the post-antique layers were simply cast aside as rubbish during the excavation of ancient sites; it was this way in Rome until the excavation of the *Crypta Balbi* in the 1980s. Amphitheaters, which in the Middle Ages became whole new urban quarters, were so brutally uncovered that they are now often open wounds in the historical fabric of settlement; today, happily, there is no longer a danger that the amphitheater of Lucca or Florence would be opened up in this fashion.

If we can believe that, with the emergence of *medieval archaeology*¹² (a combination of words that as late as the 1950s would have been considered a paradox, so completely was the concept “archaeology” reserved for the *classical* era), the medievalist's gaze would automatically extend to ancient remains, we must still remember that in *spolia* studies, the interlocutor of the art historian and the historian is not the medieval, but the classical archaeologist. For it is he who knows the full breadth and diversity of the ancient production.

This is indispensable for another great and profoundly *historical* question: what was selected from the great legacy of Antiquity for spoliation, and what was discarded? For the reduction of a supply through history never occurs uniformly, but affects one category more than another. What the historian observes in his archival sources, above all in the parchment documents, is also valid for monumental sources: here too, the various categories have widely varying chances for survival.¹³

Take the example of statues. Insofar as they remained above ground in the Middle Ages (we are not concerned here with those that ended up underground soon after the end of Antiquity and were excavated in huge numbers in the modern era), they generally experienced a difficult fate. One could not reuse them, or rather only in unusual circumstances: Benedetto Antelami (or his workshop) makes an archangel out of a *togatus* in the Baptistry of Parma, or Arnolfo di Cambio makes a Madonna out of a *Tyche* or a *Fortuna Annonaria* for the tomb of Cardinal de Bray in Orvieto.¹⁴ The statue, above all the nude statue, counted as *the* symbol of paganism, an *idolum*, before which the martyrs had been forced into idolatrous worship; and it was as such that they were portrayed, when

12 Gelichi, *Introduzione*.

13 Esch, “Chance et hasard de transmission” (archaeological examples: pp. 22–3).

14 Parma: Peroni, “Teste a sè stanti”; Orvieto: Romanini, “Une statue romaine”.



Fig. 1.4 A nude statue of Venus discovered at Ostia

ancient statues were represented at all.¹⁵ Thus statues were for the most part deliberately destroyed, mutilated, or burned into lime, unless it was possible to reinterpret them in a Christian fashion; for example, to turn a Pan into John the Baptist. *Interpretatio christiana* “defused” a pagan statue like a bomb. But that was rare, and a statue – misunderstood, feared, and of little utility – had minimal chances for survival. After all, what were the Middle Ages to do with a nude female statue? A nude female statue (Fig. 1.4) had a far smaller chance of survival than a clothed male, a bronze statue far smaller chances than a marble one, an Ionic capital (outside of Rome) far smaller chances than a Corinthian, and so forth.

15 Himmelmann, *Antike Götter*; Gramaccini, *Mirabilia*; Wiegartz, *Antike Bildwerke*.

Thus the reduction of the original supply has not been uniform, and does not correspond to the original proportions of its components. The historian can pose the question of the skewed proportions of what has been preserved and of the criteria of selection, but only the archaeologist can answer that question, for to do so requires a conception of the entire original supply, which only he has. It is of central importance for the "Census of Antique Works of Art and Architecture Known in the Renaissance"¹⁶ to have a precise conception of how the Middle Ages filtered the supply of antiquities through specific criteria of selection. For this question, it is not necessary to distinguish between a Phidias and a Polycleitus, nor between a Greek original and a Roman copy, but it is necessary to know the typology of ancient statues, their attributes and potential for interpretation. Only works that later generations consider usable, and which they can make their own, will survive above ground.

The problem of reuse is not only visible in hindsight, and is not limited to the tension between Antiquity and the Middle Ages. It is a true historical problem that is valid for all ages, even between the present and the future. Dear old Goethe once gave dramatic expression to this insight. At the tomb of the poet Christoph Martin Wieland in Weimar, which was to be protected by an iron railing, he claimed to see those "iron rods around Wieland's grave already flashing as horseshoes under the feet of some future cavalry" ("*Eisenstäbe um das Wielandsche Grab schon als Hufeisen unter den Pferdefüßen einer künftigen Kavallerie blinken*"). He added that he could see this because he "lived in millennia" ("*in Jahrtausenden lebe*").¹⁷ One could not state more drastically or concretely that everything, literally everything, is exposed to the danger and the potential of reuse.

A further question bearing on reception, to which the medievalist can make a contribution, concerns the motives for the use of *spolia*.¹⁸ The question of why certain *spolia* were used contributes to the understanding of what was chosen for spoliation, and what was discarded, out of the rich repertoire of available ancient pieces. It is not accidental use, dictated by the occasion and by what lay at hand, that is the proper object of *spolia* studies, but rather conscious, targeted choice.

The motives for using *spolia* are quite diverse. Emperors and popes exploited *spolia* for political ends, to make manifest their universal, "Roman" claims; above all the papacy, once the Reform of the Church made it self-consciously the political rival of the empire. (And even if one sometimes

16 A collaborative project of the Humboldt-Universität Berlin, the Warburg Institute, the Bibliotheca Hertziana, and the Getty Research Institute. The journal *Pegasus: Berliner Beiträge zum Nachleben der Antike*, edited by H. Bredekamp and A. Nesselrath, provides information regarding the progress and results of the project.

17 Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe*, 5. Juli 1827, pp. 247–8.

18 On the spectrum of motives see Esch, "Spolien", pp. 42–57.

questions whether a *spolium* was seen as ancient Roman at all, in any programmatic display of *spolia* for the purpose of political legitimation, the reused piece must have been so construed.) The papacy even usurped a material – porphyry – that had been reserved for the emperor.¹⁹ Cities, in rivalry with other cities, made *spolia* their insignia, in order to legitimate their recent communal autonomy and to demonstrate their age and rank; next to these objects judgments were pronounced, officials were sworn in, and laws were promulgated (Fig. 1.5).

Indeed, cities robbed such *spolia* as church bells and harbor chains from one another as trophies, precisely because they were of such great civic significance.²⁰ More than any other city, Rome has always attracted the particular interest of *spolia* studies. Claimed by both emperor and pope, finally attempting to elevate itself to the status of an autonomous commune in opposition to both, Rome presents a triangular relationship that was expressed in the instrumentalization of *spolia*.²¹

The primary motive for using *spolia*, of course, was to make use of second-hand structural elements in order to speed contemporary building projects and to reduce their cost. These elements lay all around, ready to reuse, and rendered the path to the quarry superfluous. But even in the case of mere blocks of stone, an admiration for their comeliness – the precise cut of the stone, the beautiful material – could intermingle with the pleasure afforded by their use-value, as judgments in the written sources show: “indestructible”, says Hermann of Reichenau of bonded masonry; “seamlessly compact”, appraises Otto of Freising; “irreplaceable”, say the Colonna in the trial against Boniface VIII; “not as poor as today”, opines the *Chronique des comtes d’Anjou*.²²

In these documents, for once, the perception and appraisal of ancient walls are articulated in words. We would like to know more about this: how ancient monuments, or ancient *spolia* – for which the Middle Ages

19 On the use of porphyry, besides Deér and de Blaauw, see most recently Palmentrieri, “Un tondo strigilato”.

20 On the trophy character of *spolia* see most recently, on the example of Genoa: Müller, *Sic hostes lanua frangit*.

21 For recent studies of the use of *spolia* in Rome in the early and high Middle Ages see, for example, Krautheimer, *Rome*, esp. chs 6 and 7; Guarducci, “Federico II”; Kinney, “*Spolia* from the Baths of Caracalla”; de Blaauw, “Papst und Purpur”; Claussen, *Die Kirchen der Stadt Rom*; Coates-Stephens, “Epigraphy as *spolia*”; Fabricius Hansen, *The Eloquence of Appropriation*; Brandenburg, *Die frühchristlichen Kirchen Roms*; Guiglia Guidobaldi and Pensabene, “Il recupero dell’antico”; Kinney, “Rome in the Twelfth Century”.

22 Hermann of Reichenau, *Chronicon*, p. 132 ad 1053; Otto of Freising/Rahewin, *Gesta Friderici*, pp. 216–17 (ad 1158); Colonna: Petrini, *Memorie prenestine*, p. 430; Anjou: *Chronique des comtes d’Anjou*, p. 336 (ad 1149). On the interpretation and appraisal of ancient monuments in literary texts, on the other hand, see Herklotz, “Il monumento classico”.



Fig. 1.5 Rome, Musei Capitolini, funerary inscription of Agrippina the Elder converted into the grain-measure of the Roman commune

had no specific term – were perceived and named at the time, and what feelings they triggered. It was not in terms like “republican”, “imperial”, or “provincial Roman” that their perceived distance – be it temporal (“old”) or spatial (“Saracenic”) – was expressed, but perhaps in such phrases as “oddly beautiful”, “magically beautiful”, or “in any case, not made by us”. We cannot address this here, except to note that some references to ancient remains are found in sources so unappealing that only the historian reads them, for example, the descriptions of boundaries in early medieval documents. For



Fig. 1.6 Campiglia Marittima, Pieve S. Giovanni, door lintel with the clumsy imitation of a Roman boar-hunt sarcophagus

in the open landscape, ancient monuments were often selected, not because they were ancient, but because they were large, striking, and so solidly built that they could not be spirited away during the night like a boundary stone. In such documents, we find descriptions of ancient monuments out of the mouths of rustic notaries, monks, and farmers.²³

We would also like to know what the simple believer (who may still have borne the name Priam [Priamo da Tivoli], Ulysses [Ulisse da Mazzano], or Palamedes [Palamede da Velletri], but who had no closer understanding of Antiquity) felt upon seeing an incomprehensible mythological relief built into the walls of his church, or a boar-hunt sarcophagus (or an imitation of one) over its doorway. He would certainly have asked his priest, and even for the boar hunt he might have got such an answer: "It is our patron saint, who drives evil out of our village" (Fig. 1.6).

That ancient *spolia* in medieval walls were noticed, even when they were not very attractive, can be shown, too, in visual representations, specifically in the works of a painter who is known for his interest in Antiquity, indeed for his archaeological knowledge: Andrea Mantegna. The antiquities scattered in the foreground of many of his paintings (for example, the *St. Sebastians* in the Louvre and in Vienna) are represented with perfect comprehension and exceptional fidelity to detail: figural capitals, relief fragments, even cymatia in their canonical form. This is Mantegna the archaeologist. Of even greater interest are his backgrounds, which have received little attention. There Mantegna often represents city walls, in which he intentionally renders

23 Esch, "Antike in der Landschaft"; Sommerlechner, "Urkunden als Quellen".

visible the impact of time and history: old gates walled up and newly opened, an ancient triumphal arch converted into a medieval city gate, a stretch of an aqueduct with its arches blocked to become part of the wall, cracks in the wall patched up with lighter-colored bricks. Layers of medieval bricks rise above ancient stone blocks. Even *spolia* are clearly rendered: reliefs, inscribed altars, bossed stones! This is Mantegna the historian, painting walls as historical conglomerates, walls that can be read as palimpsests of an historical process.²⁴ Here reuse, of entire ancient monuments or of individual ancient pieces, has itself become the theme.

Let us return to the various motives for the use of *spolia*. It was also possible to build an ancient piece into a church in order to abase it as a pagan thing, and to neutralize its magical powers; but this type of profanation and exorcism was relatively rare in Italy. We have already spoken of appropriation through *interpretatio christiana*, and likewise of ideological reuse, about which the historian has a great deal to say. In the broad spectrum of motives one can go further, to unadulterated admiration for the uncommon beauty of an ancient piece without any admixture of legitimizing purpose or *interpretatio christiana*.²⁵ In architecture, it is above all in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries (even earlier in the minor arts) that one might occasionally be allowed to claim this type of reuse, for which *interpretatio christiana* was felt to be superfluous. The popular comparison of the use of *spolia* to the literary citation of Antiquity, however, should only be used with caution (always mindful that the use of *spolia* destroys the old context, while the literary citation leaves the old text intact).

After the middle of the thirteenth century, the ostentatious incorporation of *spolia* into masonry declined sharply; ancient pieces had no place in the unified fabric of a Gothic building, as opposed to the Romanesque.²⁶ That the utilization of ancient pieces nevertheless continued – admittedly no longer visible in the exterior decoration, but as a normal building material inside the walls – can be shown from the written sources, especially accounts of the purchase of materials. Fourteenth-century documents relating to the construction of the Cathedral of Orvieto often report searches for ancient material in Rome and its surroundings, and its transport thence to Orvieto; the accounts of the Apostolic Camera reveal how frequently ancient marble was fetched from the ruins of Ostia in the fifteenth century for papal building projects in Rome, and how unashamedly ancient Roman buildings were robbed of their decoration even in the sixteenth century.²⁷ This use of *spolia* is often no longer perceptible to the eye and can only be ascertained from

24 Esch, "Leon Battista Alberti", pp. 148–54.

25 Hamann-MacLean, "Antikenstudium", pp. 201–2.

26 Poeschke, "Architekturästhetik", pp. 232–6.

27 Numerous examples already in Lanciani, *Storia degli scavi*.

archival sources; or it emerges during restoration projects, as today one is much more alert to *spolia* than previously.

From what has been said it should be clear that the mere availability of ancient pieces does not offer a sufficient explanation for the questions we wish to ask. The observation that anyone, surrounded by entire collections of prefabricated – ancient – architectural elements, would make use of them is banal, and research on *spolia* becomes interesting and rewarding only when one goes beyond it. If the use of *spolia* was principally determined by the availability of ancient pieces *in loco*, as has often been asserted, we should not expect to encounter any *spolia* in Pisa, which had few ancient monuments at its disposal, or in Venice, which, as a post-antique foundation, had none at all. Yet it is precisely Pisa that used copious amounts of *spolia*, which it acquired from abroad, and whenever possible from Rome.²⁸ Venice too incorporated vast quantities of *spolia*: S. Marco presents “the largest preserved store of *spolia* in any building anywhere”.²⁹ Florence was not blessed with a great deal of antiquities – and yet it became the center of the early Renaissance! Rome, on the other hand, had a plethora of ancient remains but turned to them relatively rarely, or rather only during brief periods of intense activity (the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and the era of Cola di Rienzo). The Renaissance originated not in Antiquity-rich Rome, but in Antiquity-poor Florence.

It did not suffice to *have* antiquity, one had also to *want* antiquity. As so often in historical disciplines, the demand is more interesting than the supply, the desire for appropriation more interesting than the availability of pieces lying around. The desire for appropriation, the receptivity to Antiquity, was always deeply rooted in a particular contemporary situation, and one must know the historical context of an era or society in order to grasp its relation to Antiquity. This is not to say that only the historian can judge the conditions of reuse and introduce them into *spolia* studies. But it should be kept in mind that the reuse of antiquities must be considered not only in terms of form, but also in terms of content and intention; not only in terms of the object, but also in terms of the context. *Spolia* should be conceived not only in antiquarian, but also in historical fashion.

Translated from the German by Benjamin Anderson

28 Settis, “Continuità”, pp. 395–8; von der Höh, “Erinnerungskultur”, pp. 399–406; and see n. 8 above.

29 Deichmann, *Corpus der Kapitelle*, p. 12.

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Reading *Spolia* in Late Antiquity and Contemporary Perception

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In the 1920s, Hans Peter L'Orange, analyzing the early reliefs reused on the Arch of Constantine in which the portrait of the new emperor has been substituted for those of his predecessors, suggested that Constantine wished to present himself as the new Trajan, the new Hadrian and the new Marcus Aurelius (Figures 8.1, 8.2). In this way L'Orange produced a political and ideological interpretation of reuse.¹ The success of his ideas is probably owed to a more general tendency to identify ideological and political motivations as essential to all forms of art, and above all to official Roman art. As often happens, this assumption, while perfectly acceptable, contains a number of traps. The worst of these is to transform the history of art into a branch of sociology, making the stylistic changes that can be observed in Roman art simply passive reflections of an external process foreign to it, while also negating the possibility of a deeper, structural understanding of the figured monumental text and the existence of an evolution within the artistic process. A second, and even more obvious risk is that of falling into automatic, schematic interpretations, relying too faithfully on an interpretative model that has never actually been proven.

If instead we analyze the case of the Arch of Constantine in detail, we can find at least five reasons not to accept L'Orange's theory. They are, in brief:²

1 L'Orange, *Der spätantike Bildschmuck des Konstantinsbogens*, pp. 190–91. On the problem of the *spolia* there is a large bibliography: see Esch, "Spolien"; Settis, "Continuità, distanza, conoscenza"; Kinney, "Rape or Restitution"; Kinney, "*Spolia*"; Kinney, "The Concept of *Spolia*".

2 For a more detailed analysis: Liverani, "Reimpiego senza ideologia", and Liverani, "The Fragment in Late Antiquity".

1. On the practical level, the ancient spectator would have found it difficult to recognize the reworking of portraits.
2. There are also semiotic difficulties. Take, for example, the commander of the cavalry squadron in the relief in the central passageway: if L'Orange is right, he is at one and the same time Trajan and Constantine. Unfortunately, no such double reading is ever attested in antiquity. A double meaning can be attributed to the same expression – verbal or visual – only if the two meanings rely on different levels of significance. For example, we can have a literal meaning on which is superimposed an allegorical one, as when the emperor is shown in the guise of Jupiter. In this case, the emperor is not being equated with the deity, but a correspondence is being stated: the emperor reigns on earth like Jupiter on Olympus. The two meanings support each other and the one implies the other, but the viewer must select a level of meaning: either the meaning applies to Jupiter or it applies to the emperor.
3. A third complication arises from an historical point of view: there is no proof that Constantine would have wished to model himself on Trajan, Hadrian, or Marcus Aurelius. Such a tendency is evident only later in the case of Theodosius and Honorius.
4. The fourth objection is obvious: in the Constantinian period – indeed for the whole of the fourth century – to exchange or damage an imperial portrait was a serious offense if done intentionally; it signified a *damnatio memoriae*. If the spectator realized that the portrait of Constantine had canceled one of Trajan, he would not have attributed to Constantine the virtues of his predecessor, but would have asked himself instead why the Senate had done such a grave wrong to the good Trajan.
5. There is a final difficulty that I consider extremely important. According to L'Orange's argument, the reliefs in the style of the second century showed Constantine as the defender and rebuilder of tradition: the emperor announces a renaissance of the good old days of the high Empire. If we draw the logical conclusions from this reading, we must assume that the reliefs made specifically for the occasion – the Siege of Verona, the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, and so on – which used instead an innovative style, presented the emperor as an innovator, even as contemptuous of tradition. In other words, if we assign a semantic value to the style of the reused reliefs, we cannot deny a similar significance to the style of the "new" reliefs. Otherwise, we are left with only a fragmentary and very unbalanced reading of the arch as a whole.

To this list of obstacles we can add that L'Orange's interpretation has been accepted without asking whether the significance of *spolia* remained the same from the time of Constantine to the early Middle Ages, or whether we can identify an evolution in the perception of reuse. A reading of the use of *spolia*

that takes account of these observations must adopt a method that relates as far as possible to the historical evidence, and apply criteria that can be tested, avoiding conclusions that are too subjective. The route I propose has thus a double track: on the one hand a new examination of the sources; on the other, the use of linguistic and semiotic tools.

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Let us begin briefly with the written sources. A systematic reading of them³ reveals that if in the fourth century they are rare, in later periods the situation changes and they become more and more loquacious. To summarize the essential points: in the fourth century the sources are clear, and the opinion of reuse is uniformly negative. Both private and public abuses are frowned on. In cases of necessity the practice can be tolerated, but only if it is for public rather than private utility. The fifth century sees a gradual change of emphasis, as the practice of reuse becomes universal. With respect to works of public utility and when for aesthetic, moral, or devotional purposes, the negative judgment shifts towards a positive one. Between the end of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth century, however, antique elements are appreciated as such, for the *venustas* – the beauty – with which they endow the buildings in which they are reused.

It seems clear that the critical moment in which our sources begin to evaluate the use of *spolia* positively *because* of their antiquity cannot be fixed before the reign of Theodoric. It corresponds to the establishment of a new relationship with the antique, which requires that there be some distance between the viewer and the object.⁴ It is impossible to rework a model that is still more or less contemporary. Only with Theodoric is this distance clearly perceptible, even in the evolution of the language: it is at that time that a distinction sharpens between *antiquitas*, which has the positive valence of tradition, and *vetustas* with the negative valence of age and decay.⁵

We can now pass to the use of some elementary linguistic and semiotic tools. Here I return to the last objection to L'Orange's ideological and political interpretation of the Arch of Constantine: if the reliefs in the style of the second century really show Constantine as a champion and restorer of a glorious antique tradition, what is the significance of the "modern" style of the new reliefs, those of the Siege of Verona or the Battle of the Milvian Bridge? To answer this question I believe one should let the monument speak for itself, plainly and directly. In other words, if the reused reliefs on the arch show Constantine fighting, hunting, and in a series of other activities characteristic

3 See Liverani, "Reimpiego senza ideologia", pp. 411–30.

4 Settis, "Continuità, distanza, conoscenza".

5 Meier, "Der Begriff des Modernen".

of imperial virtue, let us attempt to read these scenes simply as what they are, that is, as a panegyric to Constantine according to the canonical rules. For example, the reused panels from a Trajanic battle relief allude to a generic theme: the emperor triumphing over the enemy. That the enemy was the army of Constantine's rival Maxentius, rather than barbarians from beyond the Empire, was a circumstance that could not be depicted with any precision. A certain tolerance and approximation had to be allowed, involving a kind of defocusing of the image so that it could be read as the victory over Maxentius. The reworking of the imperial portrait, the context of the surrounding decoration and the large captions set above each panel would have provided the key for an accurate reading, correcting the inevitable dissonance. This is why the arch also includes such scenes as the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, the Siege of Verona, the triumphal entry of Constantine into Rome and his appearance on the *Rostra*. These had to be newly carved, because no pre-existing reliefs showing such specific events could be found. These historical reliefs, together with the Constantinian inscriptions, facilitated the correct reading of the older, generic scenes.

The recognition that it was Constantine winning the battle (or holding an *adlocutio*) was not as important as the fact that the battle scene, its figurative scheme and design, served to project onto Constantine the associations tied to a stereotype that contemporaries had seen dozens of times in similar scenes on the triumphal monuments of his predecessors. In this period the battle scene had become a *topos*, or – in semiotic terminology – a hyper-codification.⁶ In the late Republic, the iconographic code of Roman art represented a battle by means of a cavalry charge led by the commander. When this iconography was taken up by Trajan it acquired – as a hyper-codification – an ulterior meaning: the identification of the specific battle was no longer important and the image came to signify the emperor's *virtus*. It was the equivalent of a literary *topos*. In a further step, the celebration of *virtus* by way of the same iconography – or better, in Constantine's case, by that very Trajanic relief – underwent an additional hyper-codification, which embraced more general features of the figurative text. At this stage, the battle scene, together with the scenes of hunting, sacrifice and so forth, constituted the panegyric of the emperor on his honorary monument, and the specific details of the scenes were lost in the conventions of a predetermined message. Their function can be compared to the polite formulas that open and close a letter, phrases that are no longer expressions of esteem, affection, or the like, but serve basically to tell the reader that he is at the beginning or end of a letter and to denote the relative status of, and degree of intimacy between, sender and recipient.

In this context, too, stylistic differences acquire a functional significance. To return to the analogy between the reliefs on the arch and a panegyric, we

6 Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics*, §§ 2.14.3–6.

can note that in this period, the panegyric was a literary genre structured according to set rules that governed the succession of the themes, the choice of models, and the general tone. The originality of the composition lay not in a novelty of ideas but in what was stressed and what was omitted, in the insistence on one aspect and the exclusion of another. From this point of view, the function of the reused reliefs is perfectly comprehensible: they are the prescribed *topoi* which ancient eyes had been trained to recognize by dozens of other monuments of the same kind. The praises of the emperor had to be sung according to a predetermined iconography, repeated to the point of exhaustion. And that is not all: as in a panegyric, not only the *topoi* but also a specific court style was prescribed. Thus the visual equivalent would have to exhibit an imperial style identified with reliefs of past centuries. At the same time, an authoritative discourse concerning the highest authority of state would have to be delivered in equally authoritative forms, that is, forms that were established and traditional. There would have been no functional difference between a new relief carved in the antique mode and an ancient relief adapted to a new context. On the contrary, the reused relief fulfilled its purpose precisely because it had already demonstrated its authenticity in a previous context. By this time the scenes no longer meant very much when taken individually; they had to be read together.

At this point I should like to propose that we refer to the reliefs not as reused but as “traditional”. They were not stressing imperial virtue as such – something that could not be doubted – but rather performed two linguistic functions, which Jakobson called “phatic” and “metalinguistic”.⁷ The phatic function establishes, maintains, and reinforces the mode of communication, like the “Hello” at the beginning of a telephone call, which no longer means anything in itself. The metalinguistic function explains the type of text involved, establishing the generic rules the reader or the viewer must use to decode it. An example would be the “Once upon a time” at the start of a fairy tale, which makes it immediately clear that you should not be surprised to hear animals speaking, or to encounter witches and dragons.

In this way, the traditional reliefs on the arch say to the viewer: “this is an honorary imperial monument.” The viewer would then understand what kind of message the text was intended to transmit. In the most elementary fashion, the reused columns and the profusion of marbles that Constantine and his successors employed in the imperially sponsored church basilicas were saying something similar: “this is a building of imperial status, worthy of the emperor’s benefaction.”

The function of the reliefs made expressly for the arch, which tell of the battles of Constantine in an almost naïve fashion, was instead referential, narrative; they were intended to explain the events that had brought Constantine to

7 Jakobson, “Closing Statements”.

power. Without a suitable framework, without the traditional reliefs to provide the key to their reading and the ideological context, those same reliefs might have appeared ambiguous to the ancient viewer: who could be sure that the battle represented was the defeat of the tyrant, the saving of the fatherland and all that followed? Only the fact that they appeared on an honorary monument, built to a traditional design and according to well-established formulas of a long visual tradition, assured the Roman viewer that the battles narrated were lawful battles and that good had duly triumphed over evil.

As an art of representation, the main concern of Roman imperial art was to orient the viewer towards the correct and orthodox reading, the reading desired by the patron. On the Arch of Constantine, this was achieved by a very particular combination of reused reliefs and new, purpose-made ones that repeated traditional subjects. Eclecticism did not offend Roman taste, which – as Tonio Hölscher has clearly demonstrated⁸ – already by the late Republic and early Empire was accustomed to see different styles employed in the same work of art, and to attribute to each a different semantic value.

In other cases, we find simpler solutions. To remain in the context of Roman triumphal arches, we can cite the *Arcus Novus* of Diocletian⁹ or the so-called Arch of Portugal, whose latest phase dates to the reign of Honorius, around 400 CE.¹⁰ On these monuments, as far as we know, only *spolia* were used – in other words, no new elements were sculpted for the occasion. It was enough to put up simple generic references having little to do with the specific occasion of the dedication. Thus if forced to choose between the different functions that I have attempted to outline, the patron could sacrifice – at least in part – the referential function, or the more specific reference to the historical context. But it was not possible to renounce the phatic and metalinguistic functions, that is, the honorific elements, the imperial *decus*, or ornament of the monument. This had to be maintained, because otherwise the monument would have been meaningless.

In other words, by an intertextual play, in their new context the older fragments referred to a consciousness, common to both the spectator and the patron, a consciousness trained and raised by dozens of similar monuments. Although the figuration of the spoliated reliefs had lost the precise meaning it carried in their original context in exchange for a far vaguer one, the metalinguistic function remained clear and primary: the reliefs clarified the code necessary to correctly interpret and use the monument.

Taking as a point of departure the examples just discussed, particularly the Arch of Constantine, in the second part of this study these problems will be reexamined from a more general and more theoretical standpoint. I will

8 Hölscher, *The Language of Images in Roman Art*.

9 Laubscher, *Arcus Novus und Arcus Claudii*.

10 Liverani, "Arco di Onorio – Arco di Portogallo".

begin by reflecting on two themes that are closely connected to what has been discussed thus far. The first is the difference between the ancient and modern perception of the reliefs and of the arch.

Dale Kinney coined the felicitous phrase “historical diplopia”¹¹ to characterize the ambiguous reading of a single element – for example, the marble relief with the cavalry charge in the central passageway of the Arch of Constantine. It can be understood both as a fragment of a more ancient work (generally held to have come from the Forum of Trajan¹²), and as part of a new composition obtained by assembling elements from different periods. As I made clear above, my view is that such diplopia affects us moderns (and not just archaeologists), but did not affect the ancients. While accepting and entering into Kinney’s linguistic game, I believe one ought to speak more properly of “triplopia”; in other words, in addition to (1) the vision of the spectator who observes the relief in its original Trajanic context, and (2) that of the Constantinian viewer who sees it on the fornix of the arch, we have as well (3) the reading that the contemporary viewer gives it today. To avoid unnecessary complications, I will pass over other Model Viewers situated in other historical periods or who use different encyclopedias.¹³

If the analysis thus far is correct, the relief with the cavalry charge constituted – more than the celebration of a singular and historic victory – a generic exaltation of the emperor’s *virtus*. For the Constantinian spectator, on the other hand, the insertion of this and the other traditional reliefs had the function of recalling figurative patterns with a proven ability to bestow legitimacy and authority on the emperor and his actions by means of what might be called a stone panegyric. For today’s reader, the situation is quite different: in contrast to the ancient viewer, he does not find that the reused reliefs were harmoniously inserted into the figural and monumental text, but sees them as creating disorder and disunity. They give the impression of a rip in the textual fabric or else of a patchwork that is not altogether pleasing.

In other words, if in the *intentio auctoris*¹⁴ of the Constantinian age the reuse of *spolia* was meant to be a reassuring evocation of the past, the viewer of today – deprived of the network of ancient intertextual cross-references – refuses to accept as uniform a complex creation that appears heterogeneous, and he

11 Kinney, “Rape or Restitution”, p. 57.

12 Leander Touati, *The Great Trajanic Frieze*, pp. 85–91.

13 For the concept of *encyclopedia*, see Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics*, §§ 2.10.2; 2.11.3. For the Model Reader, see Eco, *The Role of the Reader*, § 3.5–6: by this term we mean the reader (or, in our case, the viewer) whom the Model Author wants to address and who has to cooperate with the text to make its message explicit. Such a viewer is presupposed in the text (figural or verbal), which attributes to him specific competencies and knowledge, in other words an “encyclopedia,” or else he is constituted as such and oriented by means of a series of implicit signs in the text or more explicit signs in the paratext. Clearly, we have to do with a figure different from the empirical viewer who must interpret the text in the real world.

14 Eco, *The Role of the Reader*.

resists the reading foreseen and demanded by the ancient patron. Instead, he sees an infidelity to the original purpose of the reliefs, a distancing. The past that is offered to him seems deformed or mutilated, and to some extent this impression encompasses the work to which the reliefs have been attached, as well as the new monumental present which was supposed to receive them. As a result, the arch resulting from this *bricolage* is itself perceived as deformed. Instead of appearing as a full recovery of the glorious past, it attests its loss.

Undoubtedly, adding to this modern negative reaction is the knowledge that we have, which the Constantinian viewer could not have had: the arch is commonly understood as one of the last state monuments created in the city before the fall of the Roman Empire in the West. This fact, almost impossible for a modern viewer to think away, makes him continually on the look-out for signs of an imminent "decline and fall". For such a spectator, then, there is always the danger of over-interpretation, of falling into what linguists call a "back-formation", in which later developments are anachronistically foreshadowed in earlier events.

In short, to us the *spolia* acquire their own autonomy. They are bearers of a meaning that is detached both from its original sense, which is irremediably lost, and from the signification that should be conveyed by their new context, which has been seriously distorted with respect to the intentions of the patron. We reach the point of attributing to the *spolia* the meaning of extraneousness and perceive in them a harshness, an effect of estrangement. By their very nature, *spolia* create the sensation of a gap and spread a flavor not of a sweet return to the past, but of a bitter, definitive separation from it. They attest a double wound, a gash for which the new growth is unable to compensate.

We can easily transfer these observations into the terminology and conceptual system of the generative semiotics of Greimas. We can speak of a disengagement (*débrayage*) followed by an engagement (*embrayage*). By disengagement¹⁵ is meant the procedure by which we detach, so to speak, the enunciation from the situation of enunciating, and thus project it into another place and time. In contrast, engagement¹⁶ creates an illusion of co-presence and contemporaneity between the person making the enunciation and the one receiving it, a simulacrum of dialogue. Similarly, the Trajanic relief of the cavalry charge has been ripped from one place and one point in time in order to be reconnected in another monumental "here and now", the Arch of Constantine. As mentioned earlier, in the reading which the late antique viewer probably gave it, the relief functioned phatically and metalinguistically to orient him toward a comprehensive interpretation of the arch and of its figurative program; but it can no longer do this today. This change can be explained by the different enunciatory role that style has acquired in the

15 Greimas and Courtés, *Semiotics and Language*, pp. 88–9.

16 Greimas and Courtés, *Semiotics and Language*, p. 100.

interim. For moderns educated in Romantic rhetoric about the mark of creative genius, style is a subjective element, a key enunciatory branding of the author, equivalent to a signature. Indeed, it is more than a signature because style pervades every detail of a work of art. In contrast, for the ancient spectator style was – at least to some extent – an objective element determined by content.¹⁷ A work like the *Exercise in Style* of Raymond Queneau would have been inconceivable in the Constantinian age, because in antiquity a *topos* could not be treated in any other way than that prescribed by a limited range of stylistic options. Thus, in antiquity, it was possible and indeed necessary for an artist or author to change the style of a monumental discourse according to the kind of content he wished to communicate. In exactly the same way, in spoken discourse we change “footing” (in Goffman’s sense of the term).¹⁸ That is, to put it somewhat reductively, when the communicative situation changes even slightly, we change the design, attitude, and mode of declaiming.¹⁹ Note that with respect to monumental and artistic communication, our modern assumptions are exactly the opposite of the ancients’: to change style means to change the enunciator, to sign a different name. This is perhaps the major reason why, from Raphael to Vasari down to Bernard Berenson, modern art criticism has expressed bewilderment or annoyance at the reuse of reliefs on the Arch of Constantine.

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The second theme on which I wish to reflect might seem initially to be a matter of minor importance, but upon further reflection it opens the way to theoretical advances that have more general implications. I refer to an idea that is mentioned explicitly by several authors²⁰ and tacitly assumed by many more: that the reuse of *spolia* might best be compared to the literary process of citation. I have objected to this comparison elsewhere.²¹ Whereas *spolia* are materially wrested from a pre-existing context, thereby damaging or even destroying it, the citation replicates an expression (whether it is literary or figural) considered to be authoritative. Not only is the original context of the

17 Hölscher, *The Language of Images in Roman Art*; Bergmann, “Forme retrospective e sculture mitologiche”.

18 Goffman, “Footing”.

19 We change footing when, for example, during a meeting, we pass from a theme that is objective and impersonal (that is, scientific and professional) to a comment that seeks to capture or reactivate the attention of the listener, to arouse his “complicity”. Particularly clear and interesting for the topic under discussion is the change of footing that occurs when a citation is made, and with it a change of authorial responsibility because it is the discourse of another that is reported.

20 Elsner, “From the Culture of Spolia to the Cult of Relics”, pp. 175–7; Fabricius Hansen, *The Eloquence of Appropriation*, pp. 168–72.

21 Liverani, “Reimpiego senza ideologia”, pp. 386–9.

citation *not* impoverished but, on the contrary, it is raised to classic status and enriched with new resonances. In other words, while it is possible – at least theoretically – to verify a citation or an allusion by comparison with the original text, by definition this cannot be done in the case of the reuse of physical material, as the source simply no longer exists after it has been reused.

A second observation constitutes a further invitation to caution. Without a more detailed consideration, the possibility of citation in a figural text cannot be taken for granted. Those who study citation usually take as their point of departure an examination of its most typical, verbal manifestation – usually one inserted into a written text. While it is easy to understand why this is the case, this approach entails certain assumptions that can condition any extension of the concept to other forms of expression. Morawski, for example, while proposing to extend his investigation to the figural arts, considers two features to be definitive in the recognition of a citation: literalness and its delimitation in relation to the structure in which it has been secondarily inserted.²² The first criterion does not apply, by definition, to anything but a written text (and one written with alphabetic notation); the second can be satisfied only with difficulty in a figural text.

Let us begin from this last point. Studies of citation generally rely upon the normal use of quotation marks or other graphic or typographical devices that delimit a citation. Even citations that are hidden or implicit are defined in relation or in opposition to citation between quotation marks. Yet for two millennia, humanity used citations in written texts that lacked such modern expedients, and even today “indirect speech” posits a series of situations in which delimiting marks are not used, and the indicators that signal it are tied to other features like vocabulary, syntax, or intonation. In elaborating a theory of citation, it is thus necessary to do without these convenient signs, or to take advantage of them only in cases in which they can be attributed to the author of the secondary text in which the citation has been included. Certainly we cannot consider their presence either general or generalizable.

To return to the figural text, obviously there can be no quotation marks, though there are other means of indicating closure and the autonomy of one portion of the text with respect to the rest. Such indications consist principally in the frame²³ and similar devices. For example, in a relief or painting we might find a base below a figure, which signals that this figure is a statue²⁴ (and thus a meta-image). Other comparable devices could be mentioned, but however

22 Morawski, “The Basic Functions of Quotation”, p. 691.

23 This is admitted by Dagostino, *Cito dunque creo*, pp. 106–7, who, however, does not seem to realize all the implications of this assumption. In this regard, see especially Marin, “Le cadre de la représentation”; Groupe µ, *Traité du signe visuel*, ch. 7; Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image*.

24 Liverani, “Il rilievo con i popoli etruschi”, pp. 153–4; De Cesare, *Le statue in immagine*; Oenbrink, *Das Bild im Bilde*.

interesting, they pertain to only a fraction of the possible occurrences of visual citation, at least as it has been considered so far.

As for literalness, we must ask under what conditions it is possible to recognize one image as the citation of another, and thus to identify the author's intention to refer to a precisely identifiable model. To state it differently, how might it be possible to distinguish a citation from a copy, a replica, or plagiarism? Alternatively, one might ask under what conditions it would be possible to recognize a bond of derivation classifiable as an allusion. This question is particularly thorny for ancient art and, in general, for all images that might be categorized as "autograph", in Nelson Goodman's sense of the term.²⁵ As is well known, Goodman defines as "autograph" works that exist in a single copy – such as a painting or a sculpture – whose exact replication is technically and theoretically impossible. Opposed to this are "allographic" works of art, such as a symphony or a literary text. Here what counts is "sameness of spelling", that is, the exact correspondence of a series of signs, in which each execution, every edition, or printing, is equally "authentic" in the sense that it does not constitute an imitation, although it can be more or less accurate.

Once the question is posed in these terms, it is clear that, strictly speaking, citation is not possible in the figurative arts. We could say, as Sabine Forero-Mendoza does, that an image is not "cited" so much as it is "evoked".²⁶ Reformulating the problem in this way, we can accept a distinction between a model and a derivation,²⁷ or, using somewhat freely the terminology of Gérard Genette,²⁸ between a *hypotext* and a *hypertext*. Substituting the concept of evocation for citation preserves the intentional nature of the citation, distinguishing it from an involuntary reminiscence, but at the same time emphasizes the fact that the image is reactivated in the derivation and not simply repeated in a mechanical way.²⁹

Two final points should be kept in mind: the first, philological; the second, formal. Just as we must understand that the meaning and value of artistic reuse change from age to age,³⁰ so we should not assume that the meaning, functions, and uses of citation are the same today as yesterday. The mere fact that there is no term in Greek or Latin that corresponds to the modern concept

25 Goodman, *Languages of Art*.

26 Forero-Mendoza, "De la citation dans l'art et dans la peinture", p. 25.

27 I pass over what might be found in (among other things) the difference of dimensions, proportions, color, in the simplification of features or even in the diversity of material, as when a picture evokes a sculpture (or vice versa) by means of a process that is defined as "intersemiotic translation" by Roman Jakobson, "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation", p. 261.

28 Genette, *Palimpsests*, pp. 5–10.

29 Forero-Mendoza, "De la citation dans l'art et dans la peinture", pp. 26–7.

30 For this investigation I refer once again to my publication, "Reimpiego senza ideologia", pp. 411–34.

of citation should suffice to put us on guard.³¹ In the classical languages, we find such terms as *gnômé*, *sententia*, *apophthegma*, *doxa*, *auctoritas*, *exemplum*, none of which covers the entire gamut captured by the word “citation” in English and European languages. Moreover, the ancient words are broader or include elements foreign to the modern concept.

Secondly, in addition to the main functions usually attributed to the ancient citation (that is, the invocation of authority and decoration), others gradually developed, such as display of erudition and amplification.³² Then attributions became more self-consciously modern, serving such purposes as homage, the mutual recognition of author and reader, and even irony and parody.³³ In the modern period, we even find an alienating usage of citation, which – rather than integrate the cited passage into a new text – tends to maintain it in a condition of alterity.

Taking into account this diversity of function and forms, the sole formal criterion that can be used to recognize a citation – in the classical as well as in the modern period – is repetition.³⁴ Obviously, this is not to say that all repetitions are citations, but without a doubt all citations are repetitions. Once this basic precondition has been established, however, it becomes clear that it is not present in the reuse of *spolia*. Thus, *spolia* are immediately and indisputably marked as something different from citations.

To summarize: in the realm of the figurative arts one can speak of citation only in a way that is loosely similar, and not exactly equivalent, to what we find in literature. In other words, the practice of reuse cannot automatically be equated with citation. Citation lives in the environment of intertextuality properly speaking – which alludes to a precisely identifiable model – while reuse lives in the environment that Cesare Segre would call “interdiscursivity”,³⁵ where the origin of the derivation is lost.³⁶ Succinctly put, citation refers to a prototype, reuse to a stereotype.³⁷

This distinction between two types of intertextuality is also useful for a second purpose: to better articulate the concept of *spolium* and at the same time to tie it to certain issues that have been mooted by other contributors to this volume. The two kinds of intertextuality imply reference to a vague and indeterminate origin in the case of interdiscursivity (for example, to classical antiquity as a whole), or to a precisely defined origin in the case of

31 Compagnon, *Le seconde main*, pp. 95–154; Svembro, “Façons grecques”.

32 Morawski, “The Basic Functions of Quotation”.

33 On these topics see, in general, *Seminario sulla citazione*.

34 Compagnon, *Le seconde main*.

35 Segre, “Intertestuale/interdiscorsivo”.

36 Culler, “Presupposition and intertextuality”, p. 103.

37 Some aspects of this relationship were already partially recognized by Morawski, “The Basic Functions of Quotation”, but in a confused way and with some conclusions that cannot be accepted.

intertextuality properly speaking. In other words, we are dealing with two kinds of indexicality. For this reason, it is useful to distinguish between two historical significations of the concept *spolium*, which are often combined.

It is well known that *spolia* in the classical sense are the spoils of war seized from an enemy: the trophy, the booty exhibited after a victory. For the sake of simplicity, we can call these *spolia I*. By definition, they maintain the record of their precise origin. A trophy is a trophy only if the viewer knows the enemy from whom it has been seized and on what occasion.

In contrast, in a derivative, archaeological signification used since the Renaissance, *spolia* means fragments reused in a context different from the original one, as happened, for example, on the Arch of Constantine. We may call these *spolia II*. They had meaning as generic references to broad concepts: classical antiquity, imperial power, the authority of Rome, and so on. But often, in examining cases of *spolia* in this derivative sense, we unconsciously attribute to them a nuance of the first sense, which is neither necessary nor justified. Of course, there might be occasional exceptions, but these need to be proven and not simply taken for granted. We have seen above how the Arch of Constantine, when considered from the viewpoint of the Constantinian spectator, has no trace of the sense of violence and fracture which is implied by the term *spolia I*.

It is easy to see how the distinction between *spolia I* and *spolia II*, splitting the trunk of the semantic tree *spolia* into two main branches, leads us to associate each branch with a different reality. From *spolia I*, the war trophy, we come to *souvenir*, the middle-class trophy, and to *relic*, the sacred trophy. The souvenir, which Duccio Canestrini defines as a “memory fuse”,³⁸ combines place and time, a space and a moment meaningful for the traveler, recalling it to his memory. At the same time, it certifies in the eyes of everyone else that a goal has been reached. The souvenir is a *pars pro toto*, a portion of an experienced spatial, temporal, and cultural alterity, the witness of cultural enrichment or of the traveler’s status.

The relic is here understood in a broad sense, not only Christian, or even necessarily religious. I would exemplify it by, for example, the fragments of the idol Somnath, discussed in this volume by Mina Rajagopalan, and those displayed on the Tribune Tower discussed by Annabel Wharton (even if I do not necessarily agree with her interpretation). In the latter example, it seems to be symptomatic that the visitors to the Tower habitually touch the fragments inserted into the exterior surface – exactly as they do the foot of the bronze statue of St. Peter in the Vatican Basilica. Like the souvenir, the relic can be defined as a fragment of a greater unity, of an alterity to which it refers and with which it puts one in contact. In this case, too, the reference is to a precise point of origin. Without such a reference and without this origin there is

38 Canestrini, *Trofei di viaggio*, p. 12.

no relic. It is necessary to know that a sliver of wood came from the Holy Cross; otherwise it is just a common wood chip. If we did not know (or think we know) that a bone fragment came from the body of a specific saint, our interest in it would be merely an embarrassing sign of tasteless curiosity. The reference to the origin of the relic, its indexicality, is crucial for its very *raison d'être*. The origin can even lack a physical reality, as happens in the case of imprints, in the essentially equivalent case of the relic that remains invisible to the faithful inside its reliquary, or relics “of the second degree”, that is, contact relics, medieval *brandea* (fragments of cloth put on the tomb of a saint), for which an “original” in the modern sense does not exist. If a relic has a nebulous and uncertain origin, we feel the need to make it precise, to reconstruct it *a posteriori*, or even to invent it.

On the same branch of the semantic trunk as the trophy we can put objects contained in a museum, at least, the modern kind of museum, in which items are exhibited with labels presenting the standard information about paternity, provenance, date, and so on. When an archaeological find or a work of art lacks all or some of this requisite information, we must do what we would do for a relic: make the information more precise, reconstruct it *a posteriori* with the help of the resources of archaeology or art history. In the worst case, we even have to invent it. The semantic closeness of the trophy, the relic, and the museum piece is fairly clear. The museum, as we know, is a place dedicated to a kind of lay cult; and works of art have often been seized as trophies of war, as happened, for example, when the Laocoön was seized from the Vatican in Napoleonic times and transported to the Louvre.

On the other semantic branch, *spolia II*, are historical collections, for example, the Renaissance courtyards in Rome drawn by Marten van Heemskerck in the 1530s. The fragments piled up along the walls of these courtyards had only a general provenance, but it sufficed: the pieces were understood as global references to classical antiquity, to the nobility, power, and dignity of ancient Rome – all qualities that the sculptures metonymically transferred to their owner. Obviously, there is no clear line of demarcation between the Renaissance collections and the modern museum, but rather a gradual transition from one to the other, spiced with a certain ambiguity. From a semantic point of view, for example, perhaps the archaeological objects in the Getty Villa at Malibu should be assigned to the category of collections rather than museums, since they all lack labels giving their provenance.

At this point, we can attempt to integrate into this classificatory system the metaphorical *spolia* – *spolia in re* according to the felicitous definition of Richard Brilliant³⁹ – that is, cases in which an ancient image, motif, or style has been taken up and reemployed in a later period, without a literal, material reuse. Any such attempt at integration requires that we clearly mark the differences.

39 Brilliant, “I piedistalli del giardino di Boboli”, p. 12.

Spolia I and *spolia II* are (to use, again, Brilliant's terminology) *spolia in se*: the part that refers to the whole according to an indexical operation; thus they move in the ambit of metonymy. In contrast, *spolia in re* fall into the domain of metaphor, and their operation is iconic. They refer to something different, and they entertain a relationship of similarity with the referent that is more or less close.

For the sake of clarity and convenience, we can illustrate the associations and oppositions I have delineated in the table below. In one column, we can list among the *spolia in re* the literal citation, the copy, and the allusion – all procedures that refer to a precisely identifiable origin. In the next column, we must place the stylistic citation (for example, a style “in the ancient manner”), the proverb, the stereotype, the idiomatic expression and all those elements of the linguistic code that refer to a generic connotation rather than to a precisely identifiable figural or verbal text.

<i>spolia</i>	domain	intertextual reference	interdiscursive reference
<i>in se</i>	metonymic or indexical	<i>spolia I</i> : trophy, souvenir, relic, museum object	<i>spolia II</i> : late antique reuse, collection object
<i>in re</i>	metaphorical or iconic	literal citation, copy, allusion	stylistic citation, proverb, stereotype, idiomatic expression
<i>in me</i>	conventional or symbolic	attribution, spurious work	metaphorical proper names

Having established distinctions among metonymic (indexical) and metaphorical (iconic) modes of reference, the logic of the analysis dictates a final step that takes us in an unforeseen direction. The temptation to play with Peirce's three-fold partition of the signs is irresistible, and forces us to create a third horizontal row of boxes for the objects (still to be identified) that could function in the symbolic or conventional mode. It would not take much research to fill these positions. For the “intertextual” column, we must look for cases in which a proper name, a mark, or a logo has been appropriated, that is, signs that refer to a specific person (physical or legal). The attributed or spurious work falls into this category when – in good faith or bad – a text or figural expression, otherwise anonymous, is assigned to a specific, possibly famous name. Of the same type are cases in which an institution is given a name derived from the past; for example, in Rome during World War II, the organization in charge of the provisioning and rationing of food for the civilian population was called “Annona”, in a clear ideological reference to the Roman imperial organization of the same name.

In the column of “interdiscursive” or generic reference, one might place metaphorical proper names,⁴⁰ that is, instances in which a proper name is used as a common name, as “cicerone” is used to designate a guide. Another example (now on the verge of disappearance) is the Italian use of “Bic” to indicate a ballpoint pen, generalizing what was once the specific trademark of an inexpensive pen. English provides many examples of this kind: “kleenex”, “xerox”, and so on. To complete the game, we must name this type of *spolia*, which seems to have escaped notice thus far. If the first are *spolia in se*, because their reference is basically internal between the part and the whole, and the second are *spolia in re*, because the reference is constituted by an objective, intrinsic and formal relationship, for the third type the reference has to be subjective, dictated by a convention accepted by the observer or reader. We can only call them *spolia in me*.

A final methodological reflection may be useful. At the outset, disconcerted by the diversity of objects to which we give the name *spolia*, we tried to limit the use of the term to the classical examples with which it originated. Then, as if for sport, we went in the opposite direction, extending the term while thematizing and specifying the distinctions between the various examples in order to present them in a table. The table clearly marked the differences and similarities between the various types of *spolia* in a way that eliminates nebulous confusion and furnishes a flexible taxonomy that permits us to place in their proper position intermediate examples, and even to discover new ones. The usefulness of this exercise, and of the table, remains to be tested by future scholarship.

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40 Jonasson, “Les noms propres métaphoriques”.

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The Use of Older Elements in the Architecture of Fourth- and Fifth-Century Rome: A Contribution to the Evaluation of *Spolia*

Hugo Brandenburg

In current research, the reuse of older imperial architectural elements in the buildings of the third century and later, especially after the time of Constantine, is widely perceived as a phenomenon that originated in late antiquity, if not in the Constantinian revolution itself, which was determined above all by concepts of political legitimation.¹ The plentiful use of *spolia* in Constantinian and subsequent early Christian church foundations in Rome is simultaneously understood as the manifestation of the victory of Christianity over paganism. The process of making architectural elements useful in a new context and for a new purpose accordingly can be characterized as “appropriation”.² But are these concepts, including the designation “*spolia*”, appropriate to describe this process? And can ideological interpretations for which there are no ancient testimonies explain the phenomenon of the reuse of older decorative pieces? Let us turn to the monuments themselves for guidance.

The Basilica of Maxentius

After Maxentius usurped the imperial dignity in 306 and had himself declared Augustus by the Praetorian Guard, he sought to legitimate his rule in Rome by means of a wide-ranging building program closely linked

1 Pensabene and Panella, *Arco di Costantino*, pp. 13–42.

2 Pensabene and Panella, *Arco di Costantino*, pp. 19–24; De Capraris, “L’arco di Costantino”, pp. 467–91; Fabricius Hansen, *The Eloquence of Appropriation*. Deichmann, *Die Spolien in der spätantiken Architektur*, p. 100 also supports this view, although he emphasizes that this interpretation was not original to the monuments, but already in late antiquity was an anachronistic projection onto the practice.

to that of Diocletian. The political-ideological goal of this program, carried out by an emperor who commemorated himself as *Conservator urbis Romae* on contemporary coins, was evident in his villa on the Via Appia, complete with a dynastic mausoleum, and above all in the restoration of the Temple of Venus and Rome and the new construction of the neighboring Basilica Nova at the eastern end of the Forum.³ This grandiose vaulted structure, 35 m. high and covering an area of 100 x 65 m., dominated neighboring buildings in the Forum through its size and modern design, which was unusual for a basilica.⁴ Doubtless the building had special significance. The remains of a gigantic acrolithic statue, over 16 m. tall, were discovered in the western apse in 1487. They represent Constantine, but originally must have belonged to Maxentius, as indicated by traces of reworking in the head. The building must have served primarily for the imperial cult, and it had a representative function as an expression of the imperial right to exercise power. The decoration of the building was correspondingly magnificent. Eight columns with monolithic shafts of Proconnesian marble, each approximately 19 m. tall, supported the springing of the groin vaults. An entrance with a portico opened into the long side of the building fronting on the Via Sacra. Opposite this main entrance on the transverse axis, the apse was added in a second phase of construction, probably towards the middle of the fourth century.⁵ Together with other measures, including buttresses and a stair tower on the west façade, a buttress at the south-west, and an apse at the north end of the eastern narthex, this axial apse was meant to reinforce the building's statics, built as it was on unfavorable ground.

The fluted Proconnesian marble shafts of the eight columns under the nave vaults matched the columns of the outer colonnade of the Temple of Venus and Rome. Presumably the shafts for both buildings were procured and brought to the common building site at the same time.⁶ In these circumstances, the shafts would have been completed on site from rough blocks, or they would have been prefabricated and brought from the imperial marble warehouses on the banks of the Tiber below the Aventine, near San Paolo fuori le Mura, and in other areas of the city. In these marble depots, large quantities of raw material, semi-finished architectural elements, and material from demolished or never-finished buildings were stored under imperial supervision. They were used for public buildings from the imperial age through the Middle Ages

3 Polemius Silvius, *Laterculus*, 545; *Curiosum urbis Romae*, Reg. IV; Aurelius Victor, *Caesares*, 40.26.

4 On the Basilica of Maxentius, see most recently: Filippo Coarelli, in Steinby (ed.), *Lexicon topographicum urbis Romae*, vol. 1, pp. 170–73; Giavarini (ed.), *La basilica di Massenzio*.

5 Carla Maria Amici, in Giavarini (ed.), *La basilica di Massenzio*, pp. 50–59; Carè, *L'ornato architettonico*, p. 24.

6 Alessandro Cassatella, in Steinby (ed.), *Lexicon topographicum urbis Romae*, vol. 5, pp. 121–3.

and Renaissance, and even into the late nineteenth century.⁷ It is unthinkable that a building of comparable grandeur would have been plundered to obtain *spolia* for the two Maxentian buildings, in a time when the preservation and restoration of public buildings was of concern for ideological reasons and to safeguard the urban image (*ornamentum urbis*).⁸ The Corinthian capitals of the nave columns, known from Renaissance drawings and from fragments found in the basilica and its surroundings, are from the time of Maxentius. Some of the fragments may be from the Maxentian reconstruction of the Temple of Venus and Rome. Probably a single workshop produced architectural elements for both structures on-site. The impost blocks over the capitals, which were let into the fabric of the walls, are composed of heterogeneous material. Alongside reused pieces of entablature with typical Hadrianic decoration, which must have been taken from the colonnade of the Hadrianic Temple of Venus and Rome, are other reused blocks from the same source with ornament of contemporary workmanship that emulates Hadrianic models in formal vocabulary and structure.⁹ Clearly, pieces that were not needed for the reconstruction of the temple were used instead in the basilica, sometimes with the original decoration left visible, and sometimes with new decoration which, notably, imitated the older decoration.

The north apse is richly articulated with niches framed by aedicules supported by consoles.¹⁰ The consoles are decorated with Victories and other kinds of ornament in the rough, summary, and simplified style typical of the first half of the fourth century, like the historical reliefs on the Arch of Constantine and contemporary sarcophagi. The pediments of the aedicules and the *giallo antico* columns were also produced for the building. On the chord of the north apse was a screen of two granite columns carrying an entablature. The columns may have come from the portico surrounding the Temple of Venus and Rome, as they have identical proportions. The capitals are of contemporary workmanship in a traditional style, while the entablature comprises reused blocks of Proconnesian marble that were cut and fitted to the site. Once again, the forms and composition of the ornament follows the model of the interior entablature of the Hadrianic temple.¹¹

The Basilica was an exceptional building of great architectural distinction and considerable significance for the political ideology of Maxentius, which

7 Martin Maischberger, in Steinby (ed.), *Lexicon topographicum urbis Romae*, vol. 3, p. 223; vol. 5, pp. 71–2; Maischberger, *Marmor*; Mattern, “Vom Steinbruch zur Baustelle”; Pensabene and Panella, *Arco di Costantino*, pp. 28–33; Pensabene, “Depositi e magazzini di marmi”, pp. 561–88.

8 Geyer, “Ne ruinis urbis deformatur”; MacMullen, “Roman Imperial Building in the Provinces”; Scheithauer, *Kaiserliche Bautätigkeit in Rom*; Hoffmann, *Die “Denkmalpflege” vor der Denkmalpflege*.

9 Carè, *L’ornato architettonico*, pp. 27–31, 130.

10 Carè, *L’ornato architettonico*, pp. 32–4.

11 Carè, *L’ornato architettonico*, pp. 34–5.

stood at the center of his building program. It also had great significance for the office of the emperor, as is attested by its rededication by the Senate to the victor after Maxentius was deposed.¹² Yet its architectural decoration had a heterogeneous appearance: finished pieces or rough blocks from the marble storehouses and leftover pieces from the neighboring construction site of the Temple of Venus and Rome were used sometimes just as building material, and sometimes with the original decoration visible; pieces produced specifically for the building and reused blocks decorated with new ornament were all used on equal footing and side-by-side. An important criterion of selection must have been the availability of material, as well as the quality and suitable dimensions of the reused pieces from the site of the Hadrianic temple. It is noteworthy that the contemporary ornament on the reused blocks was based on the Hadrianic model, while the north apse, datable to the mid-fourth century, exhibits contemporary decoration. Again, older pieces and imitations of them were placed side-by-side with contemporary work.

The political situation, considerations of time and cost, and the desire to furnish this significant building with the finest possible materials under the circumstances, in accordance with traditional expectations for public and imperial buildings; all of these were important motives for the pragmatically determined selection of marble elements. But in the final analysis, a certain mental attitude must have been decisive for the use of available older decorative elements and the emulation of older models in the newly manufactured ones. Clearly, the late antique viewer did not experience the older pieces as alien, even if we today perceive their style as anachronistic. The significance and value of architectural ornament in late antiquity are made clear in a law of Emperor Majorian of 458, which decrees that it should be salvaged from dilapidated buildings, in order to preserve the *ornatus*.¹³ The forms and quality of older ornamental carvings were valued and treasured; placed on newly built structures, they could confer the much-appreciated traditional decoration that evidently was viewed as unsurpassed.

The Arch of Constantine

This finding may be further clarified by consideration of the decoration of other contemporary structures. The Arch of Constantine, together with the Constantinian ecclesiastical foundations, is the classical example of the use of *spolia*, and it is generally believed to be the first monument in which *spolia* appear on a large scale for ideological reasons. In the large-scale reuse of older state reliefs and decorative elements, the Arch of Constantine was anticipated

12 Aurelius Victor, *Caesares* 40.26.

13 *Codex Theodosianus, Novellae Maiores*, 4 (a.458).

by the Arco di Portogallo, which I would attribute to Aurelian, and by the *Arcus Novus* of Diocletian, both erected across the Via Lata. Here I will discuss only the Arch of Constantine, as recent investigations of this monument have laid the necessary groundwork for our purposes.¹⁴

Alongside contemporary reliefs, the primary decoration of the arch comprises a sequence of state reliefs: Trajanic scenes of battle in the central passage and on the short sides of the attic; Hadrianic tondi with scenes of sacrifice and hunting in prominent positions in the four fields on either side of the central passage; and eight relief panels from the reign of Marcus Aurelius, as well as eight Trajanic statues of barbarians on the attic (Figs. 8.1 and 8.2). All of these elements have been combined to form a harmonious ensemble, which gives the arch a clear, balanced, and functional appearance appropriate to an imperial victory monument. Recent scholarship has rightly challenged the common assumption that the extensive Trajanic *spolia* were taken from the Forum of Trajan in an attempt to appropriate these monuments of a “good emperor” in order to legitimate Constantine’s own rule. Such plundering, including the removal of the monumental statues of Dacian captives, would have inflicted serious and clearly visible damage,¹⁵ not to mention the fact that the acquisition of *spolia* by damaging the monument would have annulled the alleged ideological reference to the model emperor. Likewise, the reliefs from the era of Marcus Aurelius, which probably came from an arch of that emperor erected in 176 on the Clivus Argentarius, most likely were not obtained by dismantling the structure, because the arch was already ruinous.¹⁶ The same may be said of the Hadrianic tondi and the monument on which they were found. The heterogeneity of these elements indicates that no unified stock from an abandoned building was available; they must have come from the extensive imperial marble depots. The storage of such salvaged pieces is attested precisely for Trajanic state monuments: fragmentary Trajanic inscriptions were reused as building material in the Colosseum and in the Constantinian Basilica of St. Peter, which must have come from a warehouse of such blocks.¹⁷ Furthermore, numerous statues of barbarians in colored marble matching the sculptures of Dacians on the arch have been discovered in the Campus Martius, some not entirely finished, which indicates that there were marble storehouses and workshops in this region.¹⁸ It is likely that the Constantinian officials responsible for the decoration of the arch turned to this

14 Mario Torelli, in Steinby (ed.), *Lexicon topographicum urbis Romae*, vol. 1, pp. 77–9, 101–2; Pensabene and Panella, *Arco di Costantino*; De Capraris, “L’arco di Costantino”.

15 Gauer, “Konstantin und die Geschichte”.

16 Mario Torelli, in Steinby (ed.), *Lexicon topographicum urbis Romae*, vol. 1, pp. 98–9; Pensabene and Panella, *Arco di Costantino*, pp. 33–5; De Capraris, “L’arco di Costantino”, pp. 471–2.

17 Pensabene and Panella, *Arco di Costantino*, pp. 32–3, Ill. 23; De Capraris, “L’arco di Costantino”, p. 470.

18 Maischberger, *Marmor in Rom*, pp. 147–51.

source for the attic, especially since the inscription *ad arcum* is found on the bases of the figures.

There is a significant parallel in the “Cancelleria reliefs”, Domitianic state reliefs which, to judge from the pristine condition of the surface, were never used because of Domitian’s *damnatio memoriae*. Under Nerva or Trajan, the portrait head was replaced with that of Nerva, but the reliefs still were not used; they were found in 1939 in a depot near the Tomb of Hirtius in the Campus Martius together with other relief sculptures from public monuments. The reliefs later reused on Diocletian’s *Arcus Novus* must have been taken from a monument of Emperor Claudius in the Campus Martius that was removed during the high imperial redevelopment of the area, and similarly stored in a depot.¹⁹ This important finding allows us to draw several conclusions: 1) older state reliefs were already being reused in the first century of the imperial era; 2) unused decorative elements from public buildings were apparently stored for eventual reuse; 3) the Cancelleria reliefs and the reused reliefs of Claudius, whose content explicitly references the political ideology of Domitian and a particular occasion during the reign of Claudius, respectively, were adapted by reworking the heads of the emperors without regard for the original message. They were therefore perceived as merely a type (“state relief”) and were reused without any concrete ideological reference. The utilization of reliefs intended for the glorification of a ruler who subsequently suffered *damnatio* also demonstrates that no ideological content was transferred apart from the general typological content (“state relief” or “representation of imperial rule”). This finding undermines the alleged reference to “good” emperors in the reused reliefs of the Arch of Constantine. Finally, 4) neither the Cancelleria reliefs nor the Claudian reliefs can be designated “*spolia*” in the strict sense of the word. Doubtless their (intended) reuse was due to their availability, their identity as “state reliefs”, and to the exemplary quality of their figural imagery and execution.

These conclusions have important implications for the evaluation of the reused decorative elements on the Arch of Constantine. The state reliefs and the statues of Dacians should not be considered *spolia* in the true sense of the word; they rather represent material that was stored and ready for use in public buildings. Their general availability deprives them of any concrete ideological reference, except for their typological significance as “state reliefs” or “imperial representations”. This argument is strengthened by the consideration that the choice among the warehoused pieces was doubtless quite limited, so there was no opportunity for an ideologically based, targeted selection. Further confirmation of this view comes from the fact that the Hadrianic tondi were

19 Erika Simon, in Helbig, *Führer durch die öffentlichen Sammlungen*, vol. 1, Nr. 12; Maischberger, *Marmor in Rom*, p. 135. On the Claudian reliefs see above, fn. 14, and De Capraris, “L’arco di Costantino”, pp. 470–71. Of different opinion: Kinney, “*Spolia. Damnatio and renovatio memoriae*”, p. 132.

not installed on the arch in their logical sequence. Attempts to nevertheless find a meaning in their arrangement are certainly misguided.²⁰ The sculptures reused on the arch were state reliefs that, by means of their impressive quality, could in a general sense denote the world of the ruler and the victorious *imperium* of Constantine. The builders deliberately employed older pieces for such emblematic representations, except for the contemporary tondi with Sol and Luna, because of their exceptional quality; stylistic differences and formal variations among them apparently played no role. The balanced positioning of these heterogeneous elements to give the arch a markedly harmonious appearance also implies that generic formal criteria such as format, size, and quality were decisive in their selection and arrangement.²¹

The extensive use of a specific type of older decorative material on the Arch of Constantine, although it had precedents as early as the first century of the imperial era, was probably part of a general cultural transformation that was especially evident in different ways beginning in the third century. Among its manifestations, to name only a few, were the dissolution of the formal unity of the architectural decoration of buildings, already perceptible in the Severan era; the rapid downturn in the use of inscriptions and the steady decline in the letter forms; the near-elimination of mythological and idealized images from sarcophagi; the almost complete disappearance of mythological sculpture; and the massive reuse of older honorary statues.²² In short, there was a downturn in those traditions that until that point had been significant to Roman society as an expression of its self-understanding. What was important now was not the individual forms, the concrete content, or the meticulous reproduction of details, but the summarily conceived general type. The fact that no state reliefs seem to have been produced after the Severan era must be seen in this context.²³ This too is surely an expression of the same cultural transformation and of a changing perception, which renders comprehensible the use of older, typologically suitable pieces of traditional quality, but of various designs and style. Evidently there were no longer any workshops capable of executing a commission as demanding as the Arch of Constantine, and correspondingly no need to articulate a precise, concrete definition of the task.

20 See, however, Pensabene and Panella, *Arco di Costantino*, pp. 15–24.

21 This interpretation is supported by the fact that the Capitoline reliefs of Marcus Aurelius were not used, indicating that the series' original internal coherence in terms of content had no significance in the new context of the Arch of Constantine and could be dissolved. An ideological interpretation of the reliefs is still maintained by Pensabene and Panella, *Arco di Costantino*, pp. 13–9, 24–5 and De Capraris, "L'arco di Costantino", p. 489.

22 Freyberger, *Stadrömische Kapitelle*, pp. 120–32; Koch and Sichtermann, *Römische Sarkophage*, p. 88; Witschel, *Krise, Rezession, Stagnation?*, pp. 70–84. Already in the late Republic and the early Empire, the reuse of honorary statues was not unheard of.

23 Wegner, *Die Musensarkophage*, pp. 147–61; Hannestad, "Late Antique Mythological Sculpture", p. 279.

The Basilica of St. Peter

On account of their employment of diverse spolia, and thus their alleged ideological motivation, the contemporary imperial foundations of the Lateran Basilica and the Basilica of St. Peter in the Vatican are usually considered together with the Arch of Constantine.²⁴ But let us take a closer look at these buildings and their decoration. Begun in the years 319/320 over the grave of the Prince of Apostles, St. Peter's follows the classical scheme of the Basilica Ulpia in the Forum of Trajan, with its length of over 120 m., its five aisles and four colonnades.²⁵ The colonnades, with their perspectival alignment, are functionally and aesthetically a characteristic feature of classical architecture, and thus connect Roman and early Christian architecture with classical Greek and Hellenistic precursors. The colonnades of St. Peter's, which essentially determine the spatial impression, reach a height of 11 m. in the nave and altogether comprise 100 columns, including those in the transept. To procure these structural and decorative elements doubtless required an enormous effort, for which the emperor took responsibility, as we learn from the sources for other foundations of the Constantinian and Theodosian dynasties.²⁶ The imperial officials in charge supplied the material from the state quarries and from official marble warehouses. The colonnades consisted of heterogeneous materials of various colors. In the nave were shafts of gray and red granite, green *cipollino*, and colored *portasanta* and *africano*, while the shafts in the aisles consisted of red and gray granite and Proconnesian marble. Scale drawings by Renaissance architects such as Peruzzi and Antonio da Sangallo show that the shafts differed from each other not only in material and color, but also in size, and that they were ordered in pairs according to material and color. The combination of heterogeneous materials and their arrangement in a rhythmically determined order is a novelty with respect to classical architecture. The arrangement in pairs of column shafts, bases and capitals of various orders and eras has been perceived as a characteristic result of using *spolia* from the sixteenth century into our own time. However, the variation in size, materials, colors, and orders is not explained by the assumption that these elements were *spolia*. *Spolia* obtained by plundering a grand old Roman building of this scale would necessarily have produced a more unified supply of architectural elements. Thus precisely the heterogeneity of the colonnades of St. Peter's confirms that the material used in its construction had been stored in the state-owned marble magazines.²⁷ The placement of the columns

24 Pensabene and Panella, *Arco di Costantino*, pp. 17–24.

25 Krautheimer, *Corpus*, vol. 5, pp. 165–279; Brandenburg, *Ancient Churches of Rome*, pp. 91–102, pl. XI, 1–23; cf. Kinney, “*Spolia. Damnatio and renovatio memoriae*”, p. 127.

26 See below, fn. 36.

27 An origin in marble depots, albeit for only a portion of the materials, is also assumed by Bosman, *The Power of Tradition*, pp. 37–45. On the marble storehouses see fn. 17 above.

in pairs represented an attempt to bring a certain order to the heterogeneous material, and can thus hardly be considered a new “*estetica di assemblaggio*”, an “*estetica di spoglio*”, or an aesthetic of *variatio*.²⁸ Two column bases with plinths and socles preserved *in situ* in the eleventh position in the colonnades of the right-hand nave and aisle confirm our interpretation of the evidence. They are not finished pieces. Both still exhibit roughed-out areas and tool marks, and should therefore clearly be seen as warehouse material.²⁹ That these pieces were nevertheless installed is in keeping with that transformed way of seeing already described, which perceived not the concrete detail, the concrete content, or the precision of execution, but the generic, the type, and the whole. This gaze was not offended by heterogeneous arrays or by a mix of eras and styles, such as were found among the shafts and capitals of the St. Peter’s nave colonnades. This mental set and the rich public storehouses probably formed the basis for the massive use of older ornamental elements. The warehoused pieces were available on a large scale to the imperial benefactors; they could meet a large demand in a short period of time; and in the luxury of color of the shafts and the rich designs of the capitals, they could give the basilica a decoration appropriate to a great public building. There is no room here for an ideological explanation of their use.

The Lateran Basilica

We should expect a similar set of circumstances in the case of the Lateran Basilica, the cathedral of Rome, which was founded by Constantine in 312, immediately following his victory over Maxentius.³⁰ The 38 columns of the nave colonnades admittedly possessed homogeneous red granite shafts, but the capitals were of various orders and were apparently once more arranged in pairs. Thus in this imperial church foundation as well, we must assume that the columns were taken from warehouse inventories by imperial decree. The 21 *verde antico* column shafts in each aisle colonnade may likewise have been warehouse material, while their white marble bases were certainly produced specifically for them. In this victory monument and ex voto to the God of the Christians following the successful battle for Rome against Maxentius, warehoused materials were used because they were available in sufficient quantities, and stood on equal footing with new ornaments produced specifically for the church. Under Maxentius, the Corinthian capitals ordered specifically for the reconstruction of the Temple of Venus and Rome (used also in the Basilica of Maxentius) were made in the style of those in the Hadrianic predecessor, but

28 Thus Pensabene and Panella, *Arco di Costantino*, pp. 22–4.

29 Brandenburg, *Ancient Churches of Rome*, p. 98, pl. XI, 14.

30 Krautheimer, *Corpus*, vol. 5, pp. 1–92; Brandenburg, *Ancient Churches of Rome*, pp. 20–37; Kinney, “*Spolia. Damnatio and renovatio memoriae*”, p. 127.

in the case of the Lateran Basilica, where there was no obligation to follow any particular model for the ornament, Constantine employed whatever high-quality older pieces were available. As there was only a limited selection, elements of different orders had to be combined. In this case too, we must refrain from an ideological interpretation, on account of the demonstrably pragmatic considerations that drove the acquisition of the pieces. They seem not to have been perceived as foreign bodies (and they could hardly have been perceived as inferior to contemporary architectural sculpture); rather they were preferred for their magnificence and formal opulence. The basis for the use of older, heterogeneous decoration was formed by several factors: the creation of a new building type, the great Constantinian Christian basilica, which served a new and complex function as victory monument and cathedral; the contemporary way of seeing, distanced from the classical insistence on the unity of decorative forms and content, and more open to typological organization; and finally, a pragmatic approach to construction.

The Basilica of S. Paolo fuori le Mura

We may enlarge upon the insights gained thus far by considering a building that contains no older, “foreign” material at all, but was decorated solely with contemporary work: the Basilica of St. Paul over the grave of the apostle on the Via Ostiense, founded by the emperors Theodosius, Valentinian II, and Arcadius, dedicated in 390, and completed at the beginning of the fifth century under Honorius.³¹ The colonnades of the five-aisled basilica, built in emulation of St. Peter’s at the Vatican, consist of columns of Proconnesian marble produced on-site and specifically for the building. The monumental Corinthian and Composite capitals of the nave, with simplified forms and summary workmanship, have fully articulated acanthus leaves. The aisle capitals, among which both orders are likewise represented, are smaller and more simplified, with uncut leaves. The employment of contemporary architectural decoration in varying orders indicates that matching capitals of the necessary dimensions and in the quantities required for a great imperial building over 130 m. long were no longer available. In imitation of St. Peter’s, the capitals were executed in two different orders and endowed with a rich ring of leaves, which gave them a markedly retrospective appearance. Though meant to give the building something of the magnificence and opulence of St. Peter’s, however, the nave capitals and the Ionic capitals of marble from Thasos that supported the triumphal arch exhibit the formal variations, irregularities, and careless execution typical of late antique work. It is noteworthy that the Constantinian

31 Krautheimer, *Corpus*, vol. 5, pp. 93–164; Brandenburg, *Ancient Churches of Rome*, pp. 114–30.

use of older pieces and their arrangement served as models for the elevation, order, and formal characteristics of the capitals newly manufactured for the church of St. Paul. This had become, in short, standard procedure.

The assimilation of architectural decoration to older models in the restoration or new construction of major buildings was already common in the early Empire. To give only one example, the architectural ornament of the Severan Temple of Vesta in the Forum Romanum was made to resemble that of its Flavian predecessor.³² At the end of the fourth century, the ornament of the preceding structure was revived in the Temple of Saturn, probably restored during the reign of Theodosius,³³ where the Ionic order of the late antique capitals emulates that of the classical temple that had burned. The elements of the architrave, pieced together during the late antique restoration, and four of the bases may have come from the old temple, while the column shafts of varying types of granite were assembled from other available inventories. Noteworthy in this procedure is the adherence to tradition, the high regard for older architectural decoration and the effort to preserve its vocabulary, which extends to the reuse of older elements.

The Larger Ecclesiastical Foundations of the Late Fourth and Fifth Centuries

Thus, at the end of the fourth century, the mixed and inconsistent stock of older architectural decoration typical of the great Constantinian basilicas had become a model for the imperial foundation of the Basilica of St. Paul, affecting also the architectural sculpture produced specifically for the building. This model was not mandatory, however, for other Roman churches of the later fourth and fifth centuries, including foundations by members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and of the imperial house.

S. Pudenziana, erected in the last quarter of the fourth century, was furnished with a uniform set of twelve fourth-century palm-leaf capitals. These were certainly Greek imports stored in a Roman magazine, as is indicated by two further examples, not used in the construction of the church, that were found in the area of the buildings of the imperial period over which the church was built.³⁴ The church of S. Sabina on the Aventine, built under

32 Freyberger, "Zur Urbanistik von Kanatha", p.139.

33 Filippo Coarelli, in Steinby (ed.), *Lexicon topographicum urbis Romae*, vol. 4, pp. 234–6; the dating proposed here is too early. Since the inscription announces the temple's reconstruction without naming the divinity, we can assume that the restoration was carried out in or after 391, when pagan sacrifice and entry into the temples were forbidden.

34 Krautheimer, *Corpus*, vol. 3, pp. 277–302; Brandenburg, *Ancient Churches of Rome*, pp. 137–42. On this capital type, see Börker, *Blattkelchkapitelle*, p. 188 Nr. 3 K 137.

Pope Celestine I (422–32) by the presbyter Peter, also boasts a unified décor.³⁵ This building, 53 m. long, has 24 fluted columns of Proconnesian marble with matching Corinthian capitals of the later second century. They form a unified set, once more drawn from a storehouse, as attested by the name *Rufenus*, presumably the responsible official or merchant, which was carved into the foot of a column shaft in the left colonnade. The columns probably were not taken from an abandoned temple or portico because they carry an arcade, while the complement of architectural elements obtained from a dismantled temple or portico would have included an architrave. Two additional columns from this inventory were used 30 years later in the construction of the church of S. Stefano Rotondo, about which more shortly. If it was possible to obtain a uniform set from a warehouse or workshop inventory for these lavish ecclesiastical foundations, this was all the more true for a foundation constructed with imperial assistance, such as S. Pietro in Vincoli. This building, erected in the years 438–55 under Theodosius II, was provided with a unified series of 20 fluted columns of Proconnesian marble with matching Doric capitals.³⁶ All attempts to trace this unusual series to one of the well-known imperial Roman buildings have proven futile, and were in any case unnecessary, since outstanding imperial buildings were still protected from spoliation in this era. It seems obvious that at S. Pietro in Vincoli, as with the other prominent ecclesiastical buildings of the era, we are dealing with warehouse material.

As elements of paramount significance to the lavish decoration of a building, columns were made available by imperial donors for major architectural projects, as the written sources tell us.³⁷ These fifth-century Roman examples show that uniformity of décor was respected if the stores of the imperial warehouses permitted it. The same is demonstrated by the early fifth-century church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo, whose Severan capitals bear merchants' marks.³⁸ As in the earlier churches, the architectural decoration does not consist of *spolia* in the true sense of the word. Warehoused older pieces and contemporary material were employed equally according to availability. One

35 Krautheimer, *Corpus*, vol. 4, pp. 72–98; Brandenburg, *Ancient Churches of Rome*, pp. 167–76, pl. XVIII, 1–2.

36 Krautheimer, *Corpus*, vol. 3, pp. 178–230; Brandenburg, *Ancient Churches of Rome*, pp. 189–93.

37 Already in the late Republic and during the Empire valuable columns and statues were identified as signs of lavish décor; see Brandenburg, “Die Polychromie”, pp. 250–54. Scheithauer, *Kaiserliche Bautätigkeit in Rom*, pp. 213–14, 225; Winter, *Staatliche Baupolitik und Baufürsorge*, pp. 89–90, 351. Unworked marble and especially columns were stored for decades or even centuries in official marble depots for the purpose of later use: Mattern, “Vom Steinbruch zur Baustelle”, pp. 171–88. In Roman marble warehouses, columns are found in greater numbers than marble blocks and other materials: Maischberger, *Marmor in Rom*, pp. 143–7.

38 Brandenburg, *Ancient Churches of Rome*, p. 162.

does see a preference for valuable older materials for the larger ecclesiastical buildings when it was available, while smaller churches such as S. Vitale or S. Sisto Vecchio had to make do with simple capitals with uncut leaves, that is, with contemporary Roman products of the late fourth and fifth centuries.³⁹

S. Stefano Rotondo

We will conclude by considering the last great building of ancient Rome, the church of S. Stefano Rotondo, built in the 460s, presumably with imperial support.⁴⁰ This circular building, without orientation, consists of a central space with two ambulatories. Four tall, soaring structures in the outermost ambulatory inscribe the shape of a cross within the circle. The colonnades around the central space and the inner ambulatory carry Ionic capitals, while the north and south cross arms open into the inner ambulatory through five arches on Corinthian columns. The capitals in the northern cross arm are monumental uncut-acanthus-leaf examples of the later second century, while the four capitals in the southern cross arm are from the same series of second-century Corinthian capitals that was used in S. Sabina; they too should therefore be considered warehouse material. Twenty of the 22 large late antique Ionic capitals in the trabeated colonnade around the central space can be ascribed to a single series, despite differences in dimensions and formal variations in structure and style. The remaining two capitals form their own group, distinguished by greater preservation of classical structure, plastic form and high-quality execution alongside fundamentally similar but simplified late antique traits. This means that the none of the 22 capitals, all probably dating to the turn of the fifth century, were produced specifically for this building; they were rather assembled from workshop or warehouse inventories.

The Ionic capitals of the exterior colonnade are also late antique work of the late fourth or early fifth century. The four examples in the western cross arm were produced in the quarries of Thasos and reworked in Rome. Their abaci bear the names of merchants or of the administrative personnel responsible for them. Thus these capitals were imported and apparently stored in magazines until they were needed. Three additional capitals of the same type were built randomly into the colonnades of the outer ambulatory. Four capitals of Greek marble with roughed-out echinus stand in the arcade of the eastern cross arm, and four more examples of the same type were again set randomly in the

39 Brandenburg, *Ancient Churches of Rome*, pp. 152–3 (S. Sisto Vecchio), 153–5 (S. Vitale). Similarly in Ostia, marble columns were set aside for imperial buildings such as the baths, the forum, the major temples, and the larger *collegium* headquarters and corporation buildings, whereas the more modest buildings of local donors had to make do with plastered brick columns: Pensabene, “Committenza edilizia”, pp. 323–4.

40 Brandenburg, “S. Stefano Rotondo”, pp. 35–66.

outer ambulatory. Finally, four smaller capitals produced in Proconnesian workshops and a greater number of roughly worked smaller capitals from the quarries of the Mani peninsula in the Peloponnese are found randomly scattered throughout the outer ambulatory. These groups of prefabricated, imported architectural elements, typically found in small series, also were stored in magazines until needed.

Thus all of the Ionic capitals in S. Stefano Rotondo stemmed from warehouse inventories of contemporary and slightly earlier material. Some were from local workshop stores (in the inner colonnade), others had been imported (in the outer colonnade), while the eight precious Corinthian capitals that emphasize the main axis probably came from repositories under public administration. Equally prominent, the architrave was manufactured of Proconnesian marble specifically for this building, since evidently no prefabricated pieces were available. No *spolia* in the strict sense are found. The impostes above the capitals of the outer colonnade, like the capitals of the inner ring, were cut from reused marble blocks, as shown by the visible dowel holes. Apparently this was necessitated by scarcity of marble.

S. Maria Maggiore

Descriptions of the basilica of S. Maria Maggiore, erected c. 430 by Pope Sixtus III, before the restoration of its interior by the architect Ferdinando Fuga (1746–50) speak of rough capitals in a decadent style.⁴¹ Since the dimensions of the colonnade correspond to those in S. Stefano Rotondo, the capitals must have resembled those in S. Stefano's central space, with a summary late antique formal vocabulary and careless style. We are presumably dealing with a single series of capitals prefabricated around the year 400 for the demands of public building campaigns, above all for major ecclesiastical buildings, and stored away. Apparently there were no longer sufficient warehouse supplies of good-quality elements of high imperial-era date for this emblematic papal foundation, as was also true for S. Stefano Rotondo a generation later. This is also demonstrated by the fact that the colonnades in S. Maria Maggiore carry a mock architrave, a wooden beam clad with plaster and mosaic to simulate a stone entablature.

41 Krautheimer, *Corpus*, vol. 3, pp. 1–60, esp. 48–9. For a different interpretation, see Brandenburg, *Ancient Churches of Rome*, pp. 176–89, esp. p. 185.

Summary

Let us summarize the results of our observations. In the fourth and fifth centuries, the decoration of public buildings in Rome, including profane structures but above all churches – which represent the majority of public building projects from the fourth century onwards – was assembled from rough, half-finished, and fully finished architectural elements from various eras and places, which had been set aside in marble warehouses for public use. The already finished ornaments came from building projects that were never carried to completion, or they had been salvaged from ruined buildings and stored, or, finally, they were imports from eastern workshops and architectural decoration of recent origin that had been stored for future public or private constructions. These elements from official depots or from workshop stocks were not *spolia* in the strict sense, that is, items acquired through the demolition or plundering of older structures for the specific purpose of obtaining building materials. They were not, or at least not directly, removed from an original architectural context and subjected to the organization of a different, new architectural system in a new context.⁴² Rather, they were comparable in status to generally available imports and prefabricated pieces. This finding confirms the evidence of written sources and archaeology, namely, that the urban image of Rome was by and large preserved in this era by maintaining and restoring ancient public buildings, which were not subject to demolition or exploitation for the new constructions.

The evidence shows that older pieces of quite diverse dates and orders were used side by side, without prejudice, with ornament produced specifically for the building or with other contemporary work. Presumably due to its quality, architectural ornament from the second century to the Severan period, especially capitals and fluted columns, appears to have been preferred so far as it was available. In S. Stefano Rotondo, contemporary prefabricated capitals and high imperial-era pieces were supplemented by contemporary imported capitals of eastern workmanship from warehouse inventories. They were placed side by side despite considerable differences in dimension and formal vocabulary. With the exception of the main axis, distinguished by richly decorated Corinthian capitals, an attempt was made to maintain a uniform order. Here, as elsewhere, it was the *typological* unity of the architectural decoration that was important, while differences in dimensions, formal vocabulary, and date did not matter. The unfinished bases in St. Peter's attest to a similar viewpoint, focused on the type, on the colonnade as a whole, on capitals and bases as components of traditional architecture, and not on details of style or precise correspondence in size.

42 Cf. the definition of *spolia* by Deichmann, *Die Spolien*, pp. 3–5.

The larger ecclesiastical buildings of the end of the fourth and the fifth centuries, erected by the ecclesiastical hierarchy or by the imperial house, show a preference for unity of décor, and evidently the warehouse inventories available to these patrons provided sufficient material to satisfy this taste. This demonstrates that there was no new aesthetic principle of *variatio* guiding the arrangement of older materials in the architectural decoration of late antiquity. The pair-wise arrangement of elements in St. Peter's and in the Lateran Basilica corresponded to the heterogeneity of the warehouse materials employed; otherwise an effort was made to maintain typological unity, and differences of size, origin, date, and style were overlooked. The placement of differing elements side by side cannot be attributed to an overriding aesthetic principle of *variatio*. It is the altered mode of seeing that is at work, directed towards overall arrangement and type, and associated with carelessness in execution, neglect of details, and disregard for formal variations. This way of seeing was divorced from the classical principle of formal unity in the work of architecture, and it can be detected in the dissolution of the formal unity of architectural decoration in the Severan era, and in the acceptance of prefabricated, formally diverse eastern imports even in the second and third centuries.⁴³ Ultimately it led to the devaluation of the specific formal vocabulary of architectural ornament as a means of expression.

The new way of seeing is also evident in other tendencies beginning in the third century, such as the significant rise in the reuse of honorary statues and a striking neglect of letter forms in inscriptions. In these areas too, it is the type that counts and not individual, clean, and diligent execution. These tendencies were already present in Roman culture of the late Republic and the imperial era, when one already finds the reuse of honorary statues.⁴⁴ The secondary use of state reliefs, such as the Cancellaria reliefs or the Claudian reliefs set into Diocletian's *Arcus Novus*, likewise entailed a loss of reference to the original occasion. The reworking of the heads of the emperors was meant to enable reuse of the relief as a type ("state relief") through the disregard for, or indeed the negation of, the concrete content of the representation, which was no longer noticed.

Thus the phenomenon of reuse is already anchored in the practices of the imperial era. It was enabled by the conservative, traditional character of architectural decoration, which was taken over from Greek architecture and never challenged as a system. The correspondingly high value accorded to traditional architectural decoration in the imperial era despite all the revolutionary innovations in architectural technology, structure, and typologies, was another factor. These were all preconditions facilitating the use

43 *Contra* Deichmann, *Die Spolien*, p. 94, who first saw this devaluation of form in the fourth-century use of *spolia*.

44 Blanck, *Die Wiederverwendung alter Statuen*.

of older architectural elements in new buildings. An additional development, to which we have already briefly alluded and which in the final analysis forms part of the phenomenon of reuse, is the importation of prefabricated contemporary capitals from Asia Minor and Greece, which began in the second century and became increasingly common in the late third century, and the storing of these imports in the marble warehouses.⁴⁵ In the late fourth and fifth centuries, such imported stocks were still employed in the decoration of S. Pudenziana and S. Stefano Rotondo. Despite their diverse formal vocabulary and manufacture and their often heterogeneous arrangement, these imports, like older imperial material, were not perceived as foreign bodies but seem to have been preferred under certain circumstances on account of their quality and formal richness.

The rapidly increasing use of older architectural elements in late antiquity was certainly encouraged by a change in mentality, which fostered tendencies in high imperial culture that neglected established traditions, as may be seen, for example, in the changing structure and style of Roman reliefs since the third century.⁴⁶ In addition, the extensive building projects of the Tetrarchy and of Maxentius, followed in the fourth and fifth centuries by ecclesiastical construction on a large scale, created a high demand for architectural ornament that, in the conditions described above, could be met by recourse to warehouse stocks. If necessary, these stocks could be supplemented by new work, including elements purpose-made for the building in question, and by warehoused imports. An ideological explanation of these practices is misguided. Likewise, concepts like "appropriation", which have been introduced into the discussion of *spolia* with an ideological connotation,⁴⁷ do not do justice to the evidence, which reveals a longer process of change in the architectural practice of the imperial era and late antiquity. The use and reuse of older architectural elements must be seen as an integral part of the development of architecture and building techniques of the high Empire.

In this context, it is noteworthy that marble workshops in the East, above all in Prokonnesos and Thasos, continued production on a grand scale and provided new ornaments for the great architectural projects of Constantinople that exhibit further developments in form and structure

45 Pensabene, "La decorazione architettonica"; Heilmeyer, *Korinthische Normalkapitelle*, pp. 101–5; Freyberger, *Stadtrömische Kapitelle*, pp. 124–32. On the use of Roman and Anatolian capitals side by side, see Freyberger, p. 136. See also Urs Peschlow, in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, vol. 20, s.v. Kapitell.

46 Brandenburg, "Stilprobleme der frühchristlichen Sarkophagkunst"; idem, "Ars humilis".

47 Fabricius Hansen, *The Eloquence of Appropriation*, passim. An ideological component in the reuse of older pieces is also denied by Sible de Blaauw, in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, vol. 22, cols 347–51.

into the sixth century.⁴⁸ These workshops seem to have produced series of standard capitals and other architectural components in great numbers to meet standing demand, sometimes over periods of more than 50 years. They were also exported to the West, where they might be stored for long periods of time.⁴⁹ The architectural attitude that enabled the adoption of these prefabricated and standardized materials, often no longer contemporary, which were prized in the absence of local production of equal quality, is in the final analysis not fundamentally different from the utilization of imperial architectural sculpture from official stocks in the fourth and fifth centuries in Rome. Behind the rapidly increasing phenomenon of the use and reuse of older pieces is a set of diverse preconditions that reflect a development anchored in the architecture and building techniques of the high imperial era. This development is also the expression of a changing way of seeing and of a cultural and societal transformation that occurred over a long period of time, and was not simply determined by the Constantinian revolution and the religious changes that swept Roman society in the fourth century.

In conclusion, I would assert that during the fourth and for the greater part of the fifth centuries, it was common practice in Roman architecture to use older and prefabricated elements of architectural decoration, mostly found in depots under public administration, alongside newly made pieces, while the reuse of elements taken from older buildings, that is, *spolia* properly speaking, was characteristic of later periods. The massive employment of older architectural ornaments in fourth- and fifth-century churches in Rome should not be seen as an isolated phenomenon but as a practice originating in the cultural conservatism of imperial Roman society, fostered by a significant change in mentality that emerged in the third century. The new mentality, observable in various late Roman cultural expressions, allowed for new and less stringent interpretations of traditional norms of composition, form, and manufacture. In light of these circumstances, it is utterly inappropriate to interpret the acquisition of older building materials from stocks in public depots for use on public buildings and important church foundations as constituting acts of “appropriation”, or to attribute to it any ideological significance.⁵⁰

Translated from the German by Benjamin Anderson

48 Peschlow, in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, vol. 20, cols 63–72, 76–81.

49 See fn. 44 above; Kramer, *Spätantike korinthische Säulenkapitelle*; Pensabene, *Le vie del marmo*, pp. 33–52; idem, “Depositi e magazzini di marmi”, pp. 567–82; Kapitän, “Elementi architettonici”, pp. 81–95.

50 Since this essay was written, a more developed version has appeared in German: “Magazinierte Baudekoration und ihre Verwendung in der spätantiken Architektur Roms des 4. und 5. Jh.,” *Boreas*, 30/31 (2007–08), pp. 169–89.

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Spolia: A Definition in Ruins

Michael Greenhalgh

Marble Necessarily Entails Reuse

This essay was written to accompany a book about marble, which perforce dealt with the reuse of that material in centuries when the majority of the quarries were closed.¹ In it I look first at how broadly various terms can be applied, and then at the classical meaning of *spolia*. I go on to delineate various levels of reuse, and to suggest suitable terminology which should help damp down the inevitable desire to find meaning in every reused stone. Such a desire betrays a fatal misunderstanding of the extent and longevity of classical ruins, and of how medieval and later cities, towns and villages looked before they were either “cleaned out” of useful building materials (and sometimes destroyed to the foundations) by population expansion, or “cleaned up” by town improvement and modernization (when so many late antique city walls were demolished), usually toward the end of the nineteenth century.

It is only by placing all kinds of reuse in context that we can assess and then appreciate the innovations of those who did indeed use earlier materials creatively. My aim is to restrict the breadth of a field which, “as explored in a large number of recent publications dealing with the popular topic of reuse, is perceived in the light of ideology, magic, exorcism, appropriation, citation, nostalgia, memory, triumphalism and historical awareness”.²

Many papers in this field are mechanical, and akin to stamp-collecting (after all, there are an awful lot of buildings with reused elements), with a simple *modus operandi* and inevitable conclusions. First find a monument, usually a church (but sometimes a mosque), enumerate the items reused, and then

1 This chapter is an abridged version of the essay found on the DVD of Greenhalgh, *Marble Past, Monumental Present*.

2 Kiilerich, “Making sense of the spolia”, pp. 104–5; cf. Quintavalle, “Gli antichi come modelli”, p. 14.

elucidate the constructors' interest in the aesthetics of balance, color-matching, and one or more of the perceived attitudes enumerated above, generally laced somehow with "power". Because of the general lack of evidence of intention, I prefer to argue that it is the material itself – marble – that we know to have been prized when it was used in locations distinct from its ancient resting-place. Unless there is compelling evidence (which does sometimes exist), it is surely redundant to argue for "meaning" in material reused in close vicinity to antique sites such as Rome or Venosa.³ We can even find an inscribed antique statue largely obscured by the column it supports described as a "revival of antiquity".⁴ In *Marble Past, Monumental Present*, I generally avoided the entangling thickets of footnote-buttressed memory,⁵ power,⁶ prestige, self-image, civic pride, the pedigree of personal and community aspirations, appreciation of ancient beauty, desire, intention, triumph of Christianity (or Islam), and other generalized, over-inflated and frequently nebulous claims which the subject generates among some art historians.⁷ I tried to avoid reading modern conceptions of the antique into medieval reuse, and using these conceptions as part or all of a rationale,⁸ as is the case with "memory", so often "not preserved essences", but "reconstructed on the basis of the present".⁹ This kind of re-creation – which is *not* lived history – occurred in Antiquity, as when a first-century BCE stele at Lindos commemorated the (legendary) possessions of the Temple of Athena because, as it stated, "it happens that most of the offerings together with their inscriptions have been destroyed by time."¹⁰ Columns certainly had crosses added, as at Sardis¹¹ (or Arabic inscriptions), and pagan altars got reused – but is it true that such reuse and signing "metaphorically asserted Christianity's victory over the old gods"?¹² A good proportion of Roman inscriptions survive because their

3 Or indeed Kyoto, where the aesthetics of spolia are very different; see Greenhalgh, *Marble Past, Monumental Present*, dvd_kyoto_spolia_wall.doc.

4 Tucci, "The Revival of Antiquity".

5 Calò Mariani, "La memoria dell'antico"; an excellent piece, but surely about tradition rather than memory.

6 Cf. Ousterhout, "Ethnic Identity and Cultural Appropriation", p. 48, quoting Henry Maguire: "While theorists are deconstructing their discourses, time and the elements are deconstructing the monuments."

7 Fabricius Hansen, *The Eloquence of Appropriation*, pp. 36–9 (an attempt to link *spolia* to rhetoric), 210–11.

8 For example, Morrone Naymo, "Il reimpiego di materiale classico", in an excellent essay where, however, the author seems to me to go too far.

9 Dietler, "A Tale of Three Sites", p. 84, citing Halbwachs.

10 Shaya, "The Greek Temple as Museum", who comments that this imagined treasure is constructed "out of memories and testimonials and framed with texts, documents, references, and stories" (p. 428).

11 Foss, *Byzantine and Turkish Sardis*, p. 49: at least 25 crosses on the cella wall of the Temple of Artemis opposite the church.

12 Moralee, "The Stones of St. Theodore", p. 205. Compare the gloss of a Canadian couple with three crucifixes in their living room: "They have no religious significance for

marble was reused, but this was overwhelmingly for convenience rather than to proclaim any meaning.¹³ Assertions of meaning can provide ekphraseis rivaling those of medieval writers, but are gainsaid by Coates-Stephens, who notes “an art historical obsession with spolia”.¹⁴ Indeed, it is perhaps significant that neither historians nor archaeologists are overexcited by reuse, surely because they take it as a normal part of medieval building practice encountered on actual excavation sites.

I have tried to argue according to evidence (sparse, fragmentary, and usually *en passant* rather than directly addressed to marble architecture) instead of building theories for which documentation or other support is lacking. In other words, while acknowledging that the monuments I deal with are about memory¹⁵ (how sweet the embrace of etymology!), and probably in some vague way about power, superiority, conquest, triumph, or trophy-making (the bigger and more sumptuous the building, the louder the message – but exactly what message?), and although I am aware of the uses of the past to legitimate the present,¹⁶ I yearn for evidence. Measurement is a useful concept: how big are the monuments reusing materials? How heavy the members? How far from their original location? Here Roman practice helps, because it is unequivocally down-to-earth, if with a preoccupation shading toward mania: don’t use local materials if you want to make a splash; the marbles should be as exotic, rare, and difficult of access as possible;¹⁷ and the larger the better, since technology aids enthusiasm.¹⁸ Indeed, such a struggle was involved in some of the marbles used by the Romans that they are indeed almost *spolia* – trophies wrested not from an enemy, but from the earth itself, and triumphantly taken across the sea. As a result, it is difficult not to view their marble monuments (usually extensively inscribed) as an implicit statement of Roman power and “reach”.

It is the example of the Romans that leads scholars to read so much into the medieval use of marble. Just as for the Romans, transporting marble over great distances in the Middle Ages certainly made a statement – but what did it say? Should we invoke “the classical tradition” and admiration for Rome, Christian triumph over paganism, dynastic, city-to-city or country-to-country one-upmanship, aesthetics, convenience, revivalism, or any other

us – they’re part of our heritage, that’s all” (*Le Figaro*, March 13, 2007, p. 4).

13 For one example among hundreds: Espérandieu, *Étude sur le Kef*, is all about inscriptions, many of them read in houses, in tower bases, and so on.

14 Coates-Stephens, “Epigraphy as spolia”, p. 275.

15 Meadows and Williams, “Moneta and the Monuments”, pp. 41–2: “In Latin, anything that is intended to call to mind (*monere*) the memory of a person or event is a monumentum, be it a work of history or poetry, an inscription, a building or a statue”; see the papers in Sot, *La mémoire de l’antiquité*.

16 Hen and Innes (eds), *The Uses of the Past*.

17 Texier, *Asie Mineure*, p. 433 on the difficulty of transport.

18 Cf. Iversen, *Obelisks in Exile*, pp. 57–8, 64.

of many “isms”? Except where evidence exists, or a motive may reasonably be adduced, I avoid such grand ideas, and concentrate on the mechanics of how marble-rich monuments came into being, often far from the deposits of antiquities left behind by the Romans.

Problems with Definitions

The first problem is one of language. Many words have strict meanings and entail unfortunate consequences when they are misused, or used too loosely. Computer programmers know this well, as do classicists. Medievalists concerned in any way with the reuse of earlier materials should be very careful how the objects of their attention are named, for to call them “*spolia*” is to include the baggage and prejudices of the term. A more general problem is the search for meaning in what the Middle Ages did, prompted by our natural desire to step away from intimations of chaos toward some plan or indeed progression, generally linked somehow to the past and some traceable tradition (*traditio* = “handing on”). Terms such as “classical tradition”, “renovatio”, and “romanesque” appear frequently, because they imply an intention or a plan which, by making a pattern, helps to make sense of the architecture of a period, a reign, or a country by introducing the seductive notion of intention: “X did such-and-such. We recognize the materials he used as Roman with meanings ABC and DEF. Therefore surely he intended these meanings.” Unfortunately, our knowledge of the Middle Ages is fragmentary, both with regard to the monuments and why people built them the way they did. Most of the monuments have disappeared, and the often extensive contemporary or later literature rarely has anything detailed to say about artworks. Hence it is all too easy to fall back on the very fact of reuse, and from that fact to extrapolate one or more meanings, in order to erect a neat pattern of intention, and even of an attitude toward the past. Thus Charlemagne, the popes of ninth-century Rome and Frederick II are all acknowledged to have been involved in some kind of renewal (not necessarily architectural), and their actions are extrapolated to others who reused in various ways some of the monuments of the past.

The second problem is one of terminological origins. “*Spolia*” in the strict classical sense refers to armor and weapons (and by extension trophies such as standards, ship-prows, and so on), which were taken from the defeated, then preserved and displayed. The most prominent were the *spolia opima*, spoils taken by a Roman commander-in-chief from a defeated monarch and displayed in a triumph; they might include statues of bronze and marble, and gold and silver, as well as weapons and human and animal captives.¹⁹ The

19 Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, pp. 150, 169.

term *spolia* has been taken over and used too generally;²⁰ the very use of the term implies that spoliated objects were prized for their programmatic utility. “Reuse” (*reimpiego*, *réutilisation*) is a better term, because it is colorless and non-judgmental.

The third problem is one of meaning. Any survey of reuse introduces awkward questions about the relationship between marble and reused blocks. For what solid evidence is there that such blocks were appreciated as relicts of the past, rather than for the material of which they were made; that is, that their antique connotations were prized even if they were not fully or even partly understood, or indeed were completely misunderstood? Did marble = luxury = empire, as it probably did to most ancient Romans?

One scholar writes that reused antiquities “had the potential to remind the Christians of the past”²¹ – in part a past they already knew about from the Bible and other books. Another asserts that “*spolia*, both architectural and epigraphic, served as ‘carriers of memory’ (*Erinnerungsträger*), forming the raw material for a larger narrative of victory over paganism and sanctification that was consciously articulated by Christian elites at both the center and the periphery at the end of the fifth century.”²² Such bar-room psychology is frequently laced with such words as “evidently” or “clearly” (that is, not at all evident), if sometimes modified by “probably”. But with the exception of Gerasa, where inscriptions point the meaning, where is the evidence?

It is worth noting that “*spolia studies*” is a recent innovation in archaeology and especially art history, and that “memory” is of about the same vintage, so that the field seems to some to fit easily in modern as well as earlier times.²³ Students of “*spolia studies*” are often content to enumerate the reused materials in a particular monument, and then to advance reasons for such reuse, calling into action whatever contemporary (or even parallel) sources they can find. “Memory” has become a fashionable term for dealing with the darker side of twentieth-century history. Although no one would deny that places do indeed carry memories, could someone venture to estimate for how long such memories survive? Two or three generations, perhaps? Nevertheless, the *Lieux de Mémoire* theme has leapt out of the twentieth century to infect and enthuse mediaevalists – fittingly, perhaps, since “memory” can stand duty for a complete lack of evidence.

This is not to deny that startlingly long “memory” can exist; the works of “Homer” writing accurately about the Bronze Age five centuries after its end are one early marker. But in that case the evidence has been *written*

20 For example, Küllerich, “*Antiquus et modernus*”, p. 135.

21 Fabricius Hansen, *The Eloquence of Appropriation*, pp. 261, 267–70 on “*spolia* and the art of remembering” – with no links explicit or implicit to *spolia*.

22 Moralee, “The Stones of St. Theodore”, p. 214.

23 See *Das Munster. Zeitschrift für christliche Kunst und Kunstwissenschaft*, 60/1 (2007) for a variety of papers on the theme of *spolia*.

down (although nobody knows exactly when), so it exists as at least pseudo-documentation. But where in the oceans of medieval documents, saints' lives and other accounts are the indications that some people appreciated the works of the Roman past? Where is the evidence in earlier medieval architecture for any attempt to resurrect (following the term "*renovatio*") Roman architecture except in the modified form of the early Christian basilica? Who, before Vasari, was alert to some of the implications of the reuse of materials in buildings, beyond quotidian convenience?²⁴ "By using spolia", writes Kiilerich, "time is manipulated, as are contents and meanings".²⁵ But is it not today's scholars who are doing the manipulating, and that without sufficient or sometimes any evidence?

Words with non-specific meanings are useful when evidence is lacking; a good example is "power", the use of which can be argued in many ways, none of them documentable. Does the destruction of classical temples or their conversion into churches demonstrate the power of the new religion? Where inscriptions survive (as at Gerasa), evidently yes. But is it permissible by extension to suggest that the conversion of mosques in Spain is also about power, especially since so many of them were annihilated?²⁶ More tangible is El-Hasan's threat in 952 to the inhabitants of Reggio Calabria, that his great mosque "should remain intact, and the taking of a single stone from it would be the signal for the destruction of all of the churches in Sicily and Ifriqiya";²⁷ but it is unclear whether he envisaged mere vandalism or the specific pilfering of materials, surely including marble.

Occasionally, the context makes it clear that reuse does have a meaning,²⁸ but hard evidence is generally missing.²⁹ If people in the Middle Ages were indeed alert to such matters, were antiquities used to give a building "age", to make it look old, perhaps to display, in Moralee's phrase, "representations of a disfigured past and a sanctified present"? After all, Antiquity itself can be forged.³⁰ And how are we to view cities such as Apollonia,³¹ where old blocks were used in the sixth century alongside newly quarried marble suites? In contrast, were ancient buildings really demolished for political reasons, to erase memory?³²

24 Cf. Vasari, *Le vite*, vol. 1, p. 224 on the Arch of Constantine.

25 Kiilerich, "Antiquus et modernus", p. 136.

26 Buresi, "Les conversions d'églises et de mosquées", pp. 341, 348.

27 Ibn El-Athir, *Annales*, p. 354.

28 As in the reuse of Carolingian ivory and Byzantine enamel by Emperor Henry II: Nielsen, "*Hoc opus eximium*".

29 Klein, "On the Emergence of Memory", p. 145 notes the "use of memory as a supplement, or more frequently as a replacement, for history".

30 For example, the provision of a Hellenistic replica of a Bronze Age doorway in the Sanctuary of the Great Gods on Samothrace: Rotroff, "Material Culture", pp. 151–2 and fig. 10.

31 Ward-Perkins et al., *Christian Monuments of Cyrenaica*, pp. 4–8, 27–9, 48–52.

32 Howell, "The Demolition of the Roman Tetrapiylon".

Such a profusion of unanswerable questions leads us back to the basics, namely the various possibilities for reuse. These boil down to pragmatism, aesthetics, and ideology. Pragmatism reuses materials because it is either the only way to get cheap stone, or much cheaper than carting it from afar, let alone quarrying it. This is an economic reason for reuse, and probably covers some 95 per cent of all blocks of stone or marble reused from ancient monuments. In some cases, it can be difficult to tell whether such blocks are indeed ancient, because economics also dictates that it is cheaper to rework them than to search for fresh ones. Here the aesthetic dimension appears. Were blocks recut because they looked ugly? Or were some blocks left as they were because the builders or patrons appreciated the beauty of elegant shafts, intricate entablature blocks or Corinthian capitals? Without any kind of documentation how are we to assess the possibility that aesthetics might have been mixed with, or trumped by, some ideological overtones read into the stones so that somehow they represented a return to a glorious past?

Ruins in the Medieval Landscape

One aspect of the premodern landscape which seems to go unnoticed in some contributions to “spolia studies” is the enormous extent of Roman ruins throughout the territories of the erstwhile Roman empire. It is crucial to realize that many people in the medieval West lived cheek-by-jowl with ruins, which were a feature of all originally Roman towns. Such a landscape may still be seen; at Isernia (Molise), for example, antique marble statues flank an arch, funerary stelae are set into houses, and the Fraterna Fountain is constructed largely from reused blocks. The population expansion of the later Middle Ages swallowed up large quantities of ruins, in both lime and rebuilding, so that those surviving structures with antiquities built into their walls are but a small fraction of what was originally there. This is the case even for cities once very rich in reuse, such as Genoa.³³

Travelers’ accounts of North Africa, where the move from a small town-dwelling population to a much larger one took place largely in the nineteenth century, describe a ruinscape that at the beginning of the century had changed little since the Byzantines left (apart from some Islamic settlements), and which must have been similar to that of southern Europe in the Middle Ages. Even in the twelfth century, accounts by Islamic travelers were quite clear about the nature of Roman ruins, and how to distinguish such settlements from Islamic-founded ones.³⁴ By the same token, just as Latin inscriptions

33 Müller, *Sic hostes Ianua frangit*, pp. 189–242 for a catalogue of survivals, totaling only 25 items.

34 Fagnan, *L’Afrique septentrionale au XIIe siècle*, pp. 38, 41–4.

could certainly be read in the West (and Greek ones, of course, in Byzantium), there is the possibility that hieroglyphics and demotic were read well into the Middle Ages.³⁵

The nineteenth century changed “ruin landscapes” for good, as any comparison of the plans of Milan, Rome, or other cities in 1800 and 1900 will make clear. This might have been the century of museum creation, but more antiquities were lost to city development than ever before, and travelers could see it happening before their eyes.³⁶ What is more, medieval monuments were “cleaned up” (and sometimes near-rebuilt) so vigorously that it can be very difficult to say what is medieval and what is not. This applies especially to material in reuse, quantities of which were tidied off the façades of cathedrals in cities such as Parma and Cremona without any note taken or (in some cases) the materials conserved. Treasure-hunting has always gone on, and continued to cause great wreckage to classical monuments, but the century also saw the development of classical archaeology, most of the practitioners of which were uninterested in and certainly did not record any medieval structures which got in their way.

There is a comprehensive history to be written about the nineteenth-century destruction of antiquities not only by archaeologists, but also by military invasion, which changed the “medieval face” of Cairo and of much of Algeria, as the evidence for large numbers of reused blocks was recycled into fortresses and city defenses. If we accept the view of Abd-al-Rahman al-Jabarti, the French in Cairo set about quite deliberately dismantling elements of Islamic heritage for their forts there.³⁷ To repeat, these late depredations are mentioned here because they blotted out so many antiquities. In other words, they must affect our view of what the “medieval landscape” actually looked like beforehand.

From Rubble to Reuse

We can try to render order out of chaos by erecting a pyramid of reuse possibilities, from a very broad base of economic and casual reuse to the gleaming and distant tip of probable meaning:

1. *Stones are broken up for other purposes.* This was very common, and startled European travelers who saw antiquities needlessly (to them; usefully for the perpetrators) destroyed. Examples: antiquities in the

35 Evetts, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt*, pp. 111–12 (a man from Upper Egypt who can decipher hieroglyphs).

36 Tissot, *Itinéraire*, pp. 14–15 (Roman ruins at Dchar Djedid [Ad mercuri] near Tunis nearly all gone).

37 Cuoq, *Abd-al-Rahmân al-Jabarti*, pp. 60, 89–90.

land walls of Constantinople;³⁸ in Egypt, splendid column shafts sliced up for millstones;³⁹ old churches broken up to provide materials for new ones;⁴⁰ and antique cities dismantled for their materials.⁴¹ Jaffa was furnished with marble from Caesarea as late as the 1880s, and columns were still being sliced up in the early twentieth century.⁴² Inscriptions on marble were cut up for tombstones,⁴³ and statues used in foundations.⁴⁴ In many cases, evidence of recutting survives;⁴⁵ but extensive recutting leaves no data-trail. In the later eleventh century, a proclamation in Cairo ordered the ruined areas around Cairo and Fustat to be rebuilt and, if funds were unavailable, “to sell or rent them without diverting any ruined material”.⁴⁶

2. *Stones are used whole for a purpose different from their original one.* Large quantities of flat, smooth and conveniently sized inscribed slabs of marble were reused. Examples: a large proportion of the approximately 180,000 inscriptions in the 17 volumes of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*.⁴⁷ When shafts were lacking, it was not unknown to form a “column by superimposing several capitals, or using capitals as bases”.⁴⁸ Tit-for-tat destruction could come under this heading, as with Harun Rashid’s actions in Cessunia c. 786.⁴⁹

3. *Building work itself uncovers reusable materials.* This must have been common, the more so since churches are often built on the site of temples, and fortresses were usually rebuilt again and again on the same site. Example: when the Koutoubiya at Fes was enlarged in the early 1200s, materials were discovered on site.⁵⁰

4. *Stones are left unaltered, and reused within five or ten kilometers of the first building in which they were found.* This is casual reuse, and the commonest of all. The great majority of medieval buildings before the Millennium were built in this fashion, and it is difficult to attribute any meaning at all to such reuse. Examples: houses and fountains in nineteenth-century Gallipoli: stones from the temple at nearby Lampsaki are

38 Asutay-Effenberger, *Die Landmauer*, pp. 182–203.

39 Goyon, *Voyage ... d'Anthoine Morison*, p. 158; Mascrier, *Description*, p. 192.

40 Gerola, *Monumenti veneti*, vol. 2, pp. 90–94.

41 Sandys, *A relation of a journey*, p. 149 (Gaza); cf. Guérin, “Description de Gaza”, pp. 196–7, 203, 204, 206.

42 Fischer, “The Fate of Holy Land Marble”, pp. 281–4, fig. 6.

43 Castellan, *Lettres sur la Morée*, vol. 2, 199–200.

44 Scholz, “Voyage”, p. 70.

45 D’Onofrio, *Rilavorazione dell’antico*.

46 Casanova, *Livre des admonitions*, vol. 1, p. 177.

47 http://cil.bbaw.de/cil_en/dateien/forschung.html.

48 Gerola, *Monumenti veneti*, vol. 2, figs. 8, 129.

49 Bar Hebraeus, *Chronography X*, at <http://rbedrosian.com/BH/bh17.htm>.

50 Beaumier, *Roudh el-Kartas*, p. 78.

simply rolled down the hill.⁵¹ At Sallee near Rabat, classical structures are used to build houses. At Merdj, in the Barca, antiquities were still being used for new construction in the nineteenth century.⁵² At Sousse, antiquities are built into houses.⁵³ Whether the excavations Guérin saw at Sabra were medieval or later is impossible to tell, but marble at Le Kef was still being reused when he visited.⁵⁴ Several mosques (and churches?), especially at Fustat, were demolished to restore the Mosque of Amr after the earthquake of 1333.⁵⁵ Fortresses were rebuilt, unless dismantlers took good care to put the materials far away.⁵⁶ In some Muslim lands, churches could be rebuilt, but using only the existing materials, and no more.⁵⁷ Embellishment, perhaps with filched marble, led in one case to execution.⁵⁸

5. *Ancient buildings are reoccupied and perhaps refurbished.* This is a common occurrence, and in most cases is mere squatting. In some areas, even pagan temples were turned into churches, but no indications of any notions of triumph have survived, except in those few cases where inscriptions point out the triumph of the new religion over the old, as at Gerasa. Examples include the majority of theaters and amphitheaters (Lucca, Arles) and numerous temples, usually outside Rome,⁵⁹ as well as many buildings within Rome.⁶⁰ Temples and churches were converted into mosques in the Islamic world.⁶¹

6. *Ancient structures are rebuilt.* In fact, this never seems to have happened, and I include the possibility to underline just how far are medieval ideas of building from those of the ancient world. What price *renovatio*? The term is usually applied to political and religious concepts, not to architecture; just as Panofsky's *Renaissance and Renascences* deals largely with sculpture, and well after the Millennium at that. This is another way of pointing out how detached are medieval forms from ancient ones. Both Christians and Muslims in the Middle Ages reused many of the building blocks of Roman architecture to develop new typologies.

51 Castellan, *Lettres sur la Morée*, vol. 1, pp. 216, 221–2, 254–5 and plate 23.

52 Hamilton, *Wanderings in North Africa*, pp. 134–5.

53 De la Berge, *En Tunisie*, p. 240.

54 Guérin, *Voyage archéologique*, vol. 2, pp. 334–5, 53–4.

55 Hauteceur and Wiet, *Mosquées du Caire*, p. 139.

56 Shirley, *Crusader Syria*, p. 56; by contrast p. 111, stones taken away to prevent reuse.

57 De la Primaudaie, "Les arabes en Sicile", p. 157.

58 Abu Shama, *Complément des Deux Jardins*, pp. 191–2.

59 Vaes, "Christliche Verwendung antiker Bauten".

60 Meneghini, "Edilizia pubblica e riuso".

61 Castellan, *Lettres sur la Morée*, vol. 3, pp. 8–9.

7. *Earlier structures are dismantled for their materials.* Examples include Madinat Al-Zahra; a capital from its mosque is in the Alcazar at Seville.⁶² Churches in Baghdad had their pillars cut and used as projectiles.⁶³ The nineteenth-century Mohammedia, built by Bey Ahmed (1842–47), was intended to rival Versailles, but was plundered by his successor after his death, and the furniture, gilding, marble veneers, and so on were all taken for use elsewhere.⁶⁴ The theatre at Miletus was completely stripped, though it is not known when.⁶⁵ Little remains of Roman settlements around the Guadalquivir, so comprehensively have the buildings been stripped and dismantled.⁶⁶ Many ancient colonnades must have been demolished so that projectiles fashioned from their shafts could be fired from mangonels and trebuchets – as at Acre, where in 1256–58, ten of the 60 engines fired projectiles of 1,500 pounds.⁶⁷ Carved marble and granite projectiles were still in great demand in mid-nineteenth-century Turkey.⁶⁸

8. *Inscribed or decorated stones are used in walls, especially for wrapping round corners.* Anyone who has built a wall will know the value of a firm corner and of straight edges; so attempts to argue that this Roman altar or that funerary inscription represent the triumph of Christianity over paganism, or an interest in the aesthetics of lapidary capitals, should be firmly resisted, unless it can be shown that the object in question has been brought a great distance. This is unlikely, and the large number of examples of “convenient reuse” alongside the great consular roads should warn us to be very careful about endowing such reuse with meaning. Examples: antiquities make the walls of Nicaea both structurally sound against assault, and decoratively informative as well.⁶⁹ Even at Tunis, so close to ancient Carthage, antiquities were demolished and appear in the walls of houses.⁷⁰

9. *Stones are reused in a clearly decorative arrangement.* This can certainly be interpreted as aesthetic, but does not necessarily imply any attempt to make a connection with some version of the past. Examples: in Al-Azhar, all types of capitals co-exist.⁷¹ The more than 50 crosses cut into

62 Pavón Maldonado, *Memoria*, pl. XXI. Presumably the Salón Rico was buried by a landslide while much of the rest of the site was comprehensively spoliated.

63 Bar Hebraeus, *Chronography* X, at <http://rbedrosian.com/BH/bh18.htm>.

64 Guérin, *Voyage archéologique*, pp. 274–7.

65 Texier, *Asie Mineure*, p. 335.

66 Ponsich, *Implantation rurale*, vol. 1: of 222 sites at Lora del Rio prospected, few now contain marble.

67 Shirley, *Crusader Syria*, p. 117.

68 Texier, *Asie Mineure*, p. 173.

69 Texier, *Asie Mineure*, p. 259.

70 Hebenstreit, “Voyage a Alger”, p. 19.

71 Barrucand, “Les chapiteaux de remploi”, p. 54.

the reused stones on the exterior of the Little Metropolis in Athens have been interpreted as “a visual manifestation of religious identity” aimed at the Ottomans.⁷² But who needed reminders? Were the Ottomans particularly obtuse?

10. *“Foreign” stones are set in a new context*, as when elements from Christian buildings are set in mosques. Where are we to place such use on the scale from opportunism to triumphalism? Examples: Lucy-Anne Hunt sees a small relief set into the Sultan Hassan Mosque in Cairo as meaningful; coinciding with the 1354 date of further restrictions against the employment of non-Muslims, “[it] implies an attempt at cultural as well as political subordination, or integration, of Christian culture.”⁷³ The church portal from Acre reused in the madrasa of Al-Nasir Mohammed is often cited as a definite instance of Moslem triumph over the Christians, yet it was much reworked with inlay, and given a long inscription which contains no intimation of triumph. What is more, reusing door-cases was not at all unusual in the Muslim world.⁷⁴

11. *Stones with particular designs are reused frequently*. In some cases, we may view such reuse as apotropaic – the attempt to ward off evil, or dangerous insects, infestations, birds in the sanctuary – the more so because this is one of the few areas where we do indeed possess medieval affirmations of what such stones are intended to achieve. Examples: the crosses on the Little Metropolis in Athens, and stones placed at the entrance of many Egyptian mosques or madrasas. Perhaps the Muslims adopted the practice from the Copts.⁷⁵ These stones are visible, while the majority of old Pharaonic stones were reused simply as building materials.⁷⁶

12. *Column shafts and capitals are used at a more or less great distance from their original location*. The difficulty is to prove that this is the case. For whereas the Romans gaily transported materials around the Empire (and often the further from the difficult-to-reach quarries, the better), this very fact means that we usually cannot know how far such materials were transported in the Middle Ages. Had the Romans stuck to a use-it-near-the-quarry policy, matters would have been much easier; and although various techniques have been developed to fix the source-quarries of marbles and granites, this cannot help with reuse. Examples: shafts imported to Mecca, to Córdoba and to

72 Küllerich, “Making sense of the spolia”, p. 111.

73 Hunt, “Churches of Old Cairo”, p. 337, figs. 9–10.

74 Sauvaget, *Matériaux pour servir à l’histoire*, p. 174.

75 Evetts, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt*, pp. 111–12 (apotropaic use of a stone with hieroglyphs).

76 Cf. Wissa, “Un exemple éblouissant de remploi”.

Kairouan, none of them particularly tall. Pisa obtained her shafts from Elba and Sardinia (no great distance); we do not know whether the great monoliths for the Dome of the Rock were already in Jerusalem.

13. *Documentation of some kind exists to confirm the movement of materials.* This is always rare, and what probably *did* happen often gets mixed up with what *should* have happened; that is, conventional phrases are employed as if actual actions were asserted. Examples: while we can believe that Desiderius actually did get materials from Rome (he had several links with the City), did he really send for workers from Constantinople, supposedly since the *magistra latinitas* was in bad shape? Again, at least three Islamic rulers supposedly sought help and/or materials from Byzantium, but did this actually happen?

14. *Buildings not dismantled because they were known to be old, and important.* This is a kind of anti-spoliation, and documented instances are rare. But the inhabitants of Al-Farama (ancient Pelusium, the largest Roman fortress in Egypt, a seaport and, as recent digs demonstrate, rich in marbled Christian remains as well as Roman ones) prevented the destruction of the walls for historical reasons.⁷⁷

15. *Buildings are dismantled because their materials would fetch money, and others are left undescribed because their appearance is unaesthetic.* This happens in the nineteenth century, when much evidence of medieval (and later) spoliation is lost in the hunt for museum artifacts. Examples: Tolmeta and Tancra.⁷⁸

16. *Triumphalism of one religion or state over another.* To display the artifacts of conquered peoples is a very old practice, but it can be difficult to decide intention. Examples: are the capitals in the courtyard of Al-Azhar associated with the triumph of Islam?⁷⁹ We must sometimes accept the takeover of churches for mosques as triumphalism rather than basic practicality.⁸⁰ Presumably the shaft erected by the Venetians at Zadar (Zara) is antique: with the Venetian lion on top, its message is very clear. In the Delhi Sultanate, commemorative pillars from earlier cultures were re-erected.⁸¹

17. *War trophies.* The medieval equivalent of the *spolia opima*. Trophy-looting was a thriving practice in Indo-Muslim states, from 1193 to 1392/3, where temple desecration was usually carried out by military officers or officials of the state as a specifically state activity, sometimes right behind military campaigns, and included "the seizure of the

77 Evetts, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt*, pp. 168–9; this in spite of p. 172: "Al-Farama is surrounded by a fortified wall of stone without gates, which is in a state of ruin."

78 Hamilton, *Wanderings in North Africa*, pp. 143 (Tolmeta), 147 (Tancra).

79 Barrucand, "Les chapiteaux de remploi", pp. 54–5.

80 Abu Shama, *Le Livre des Deux Jardins*, p. 305.

81 Flood, "Pillars, Palimpsests".

image of a defeated king's state-deity and its abduction to the victor's capital as a trophy of war". In such cases, all of which were highly selective, "the deity's image, taken as war trophy to the capital city of the victorious sultan, became radically detached from its former context and in the process was transformed from a living to a dead image."⁸² Further west, although war spoils were certainly collected in our period, they were usually arms and armor, treasures (including gold, silver, and textiles), and human beings to be ransomed or sold as slaves. Christian images seem to have been spared by the Muslims, but crosses were not. Examples: the great cross at Hattin was taken to Baghdad to be defiled.⁸³ If we except the Acre portal,⁸⁴ there is little evidence that marble was carried off as trophies, but marble from the spoliation of the Holy Sepulcher was sent to Mecca in 1244.⁸⁵ Anna Dagnino sees the sarcophagi on the façade of San Martino in Genoa as war trophies, while admitting that there are too many of them around the city for all to be such. A better bet, given the Genoese track record of taking inscriptions from the Pisans, would be the two kufic plaques in Santa Maria del Castello, which she believes might be booty from North Africa.⁸⁶ Baybars II brought a marble window from the Abbasid palace in Baghdad (through which the caliphs watched their subjects) to Cairo, and attached it to the mausoleum of his khanqah. Given that there is an Islamic tradition of abstracting fittings from conquered towns, this is perhaps an indication that the window should also be treated as a trophy.⁸⁷ In 1263 the same Baybars II had a gate of the Fatimid Palace, the Bab el-'Id, taken to Jerusalem for a caravanserai he was building there.⁸⁸ On the Christian side, one might have imagined that the Crusades would have been a high point of deliberate spoliation, but the evidence for this is sparse.⁸⁹

82 Eaton, "Temple Desecration", p. 300.

83 Abu Shama, *Le Livre des Deux Jardins*, p. 395: the gilded bronze cross was placed in threshold of the Bab en-Noubi Ech-Cherif.

84 Behrens-Abouseif, *Beauty in Arabic Culture*, p. 176.

85 Shirley, *Crusader Syria*, p. 64.

86 Dagnino, "Scultura e architettura", p. 131.

87 Jarrar, "Al-Maqrizi's Reinvention of Egyptian Historiography", referring to Al-Maqrizi's *Khitat* 2:416.

88 Hautecoeur and Wiet, *Mosquées du Caire*, p. 139.

89 Shalem, *Islam Christianized*, catalogues 288 items, but he sees only three of them as genuine spolia: pp. 72–92.

Misleading Monuments

We should always be very careful about assuming that a conspicuous surviving monument is in some way typical, and therefore capable of extrapolation to other centuries and places. An example is the monument that features large in many considerations of reuse because it is the first surviving major spoliated construction in the later Roman world, and a spectacular and exhaustively studied one at that. The Arch of Constantine in Rome is a rebuild performance of great sophistication, although far from the first creation to use older blocks.⁹⁰ Into it, various types of explicit links with previous centuries have been (accurately) read. But although it is almost always cited in treatments of reuse, it is completely atypical in both its sophistication and its arguably programmatic nature; and, what is more, just about useless for any accurate extrapolation into the Middle Ages, which did not erect triumphal arches, give or take the Lorsch Gatehouse. The arch was evidently “designed”, and talent scouts must have scoured Rome for blocks that would fit, since one of the Dacians has “ad arc(um)” chiseled into its back.⁹¹ There are no comparable monuments anywhere in any period of the Middle Ages. Nor yet is there any propensity to treat any large suitable surface as this kind of historical picture-show, or sculptural coat-hanger. This approach was aptly described by Jaś Elsner as “syncretistic bricolage”⁹² – or, as Wright puts it for reuse as a whole, “the acceptance of heterogeneity and irregularity of detail in building”.⁹³ It is equally misleading to view such works from the other end of the telescope, as it were, and assume that a monument such as Frederick II’s Gate at Capua was somehow in the same tradition, when it is unclear what antiquities, if any, decorated it. Another arrangement of reused antiquities, immensely attractive to us today, was the large selection of antique statuary decorating the spina of the Hippodrome in Constantinople, which had a function parallel to that of the Arch of Constantine.⁹⁴ But once more, there was no medieval take-up whatsoever, if we except the preservation of works such as the *Capitoline Wolf* and the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius.

Conclusion

The above account has attempted to categorize the various ways in which the detritus of the antique past was reused during the Middle Ages in the West, Byzantium, and Islam. These are extensive, and it is certain that there

90 Elsner, “From the Culture of Spolia”, pp. 153–4.

91 Panella, “Tecnica costruttiva”, p. 35 fig. 25 for the chiseled instruction.

92 Elsner, “From the Culture of Spolia”, p. 177.

93 Wright, *Ancient Building Technology*, vol. 1, p. 132.

94 Bassett, “The Antiquities in the Hippodrome”, p. 96.

are plentiful examples (and probably spectacular ones) of which we have no knowledge because population expansion destroyed them during or after our period. It goes against the academic grain to omit attributing some kind of meaning to such reuse, in an attempt to make ordered sense of the past. Unfortunately, evidence for meaning is generally lacking. From the list of popular theses offered at the start of this account, how many stand up, bolstered by any kind of evidence? Ideology is always difficult to assess, because it is rarely written down, and we can scarcely progress beyond the notion (with which we all can agree) that big architecture is about power, the bigger the more powerful. Magic and its fellow, exorcism, are easier to assess, since there are antiquities reused for what seem to be apotropaic reasons on several surviving monuments, Christian and Muslim. But – excepting lions – just where a certain block stops being apotropaic and becomes either decorative or inconsequential, we usually cannot say. Appropriation is a very slippery term, and (with its fellows “citation” and “historical awareness”) it is impossible to pin down, for, again, there is very little evidence that antiquities were reused in programmatic fashion. Nostalgia, as we all know, is not what it used to be; but it has had life breathed into it by the concept of memory, which I confess to finding a substitute for history, lacking as it does any kind of documentation. Indeed, as if by osmosis, the very notion of memory has bled from the twentieth century (with its equally dubious certainties about the veracity of “oral history”, viz., memory with a tape-recorder) back into the Middle Ages. For some investigators, this seems to be a handy way of compensating for a non-existent rationale for why antiquities were reused. Finally, how about triumphalism? This is equally difficult to demonstrate, and brings us back to the strict definition of *spolia*.

If most rationales are weak, and meanings elusive, what then is the point of studying the reuse of marble in the Middle Ages? First, because the very use of marble implies the selection of material, sometimes the discrimination between various kinds of marble, and often the discarding of (at least) the poorer grades of limestone. Secondly, because marble was chosen (and brought from lesser or greater distances) when it would usually have been easier to build in humbler, local materials. Third, because the continuing interest in the material throughout the Mediterranean makes a statement about high-quality and sometimes luxurious architecture which links its use back to the ancient world. It is not necessary to believe that every Ummayyad in Damascus, every Mamluk in Cairo or every Christian in the Italian peninsula necessarily had any clear ideas about the pagan or early Christian past. Nor is it difficult to accept that they kept their eyes open and admired some of the building elements of the ancient structures that littered the landscape – that is, the inescapable fact of Rome. That nobody wished to resurrect Rome is proven by the absence (except for some basilican churches) of structures which seek accurately to reconstruct that past. This brings us to the inevitable conclusion

that the medieval attraction to marble was certainly to the beauties of the material itself – and possibly in some unverifiable instances to the associations it evoked. In general (and using the terminology loosely), the great churches and mosques of our period may be viewed as triumphs over the past – or over neighbors, enemies, or commercial rivals – and as celebrations of the effort involved in discovering, transporting, and erecting large buildings in sophisticated materials.

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Ancient Gems in the Middle Ages: Riches and Ready-mades

Dale Kinney

Just an inch high, the intensely blue head of lapis lazuli overpowers the shiny gilded body of a small bronze crucifix (Fig. 5.1).¹ The body was made in the eleventh century; the head is at least a millennium older and is, moreover, female. The combination is unsettling, or as Hans Wentzel once wrote, “off-putting” (*befremdlich*).² To his contemporary Richard Hamann-MacLean, however, the dramatic setting of an antique gem in a contemporary Christian artifact was a defining example of the effective medieval cult object: “Strangeness and inviolable clarity of form work together to give the whole an incomparable radiance and mystery.”³

Hamann-MacLean included the crucifix in a much larger study of the persistence of classical antiquity in medieval art as an example of *spolia*, defined as the reuse or continued use (*Wieder- oder Weiterbenutzung*) of antique buildings or objects. In 1950, the study of *spolia* was a little-noticed by-way of art history, however, and the crucifix remained “more a curiosity than an artwork” for several decades.⁴ Hermann Schnitzler’s 1957 picture book of “Rhenish Treasuries” did not illustrate the crucifix, but only the other side of the cross to which the three-dimensional figure is attached (Fig. 5.2). This side is unproblematic and also historically useful, as its copper revetment is incised with inscriptions and the images of Archbishop Herimann of Cologne (1036–56) and Ida, his sister, who

1 Kolumba. Kunstmuseum des Erzbistums Köln, Inv. Nr. H11. For a color reproduction see Surmann, *Das Kreuz Herimanns und Idas*, p. 3. I am grateful to Dr. Surmann for kindly making it possible for me to see the Cross in 2007, while the museum was closed awaiting relocation.

2 Wentzel, “Mittelalterliche Gemmen”, p. 49.

3 Hamann-MacLean, “Antikenstudium”, p. 166.

4 Klessmann and Klessmann, “Zum Stil des Herimannkreuzes”, p. 9; cf. Kinney, “The Concept of Spolia”.



Fig. 5.1 Herimann's Cross, front side

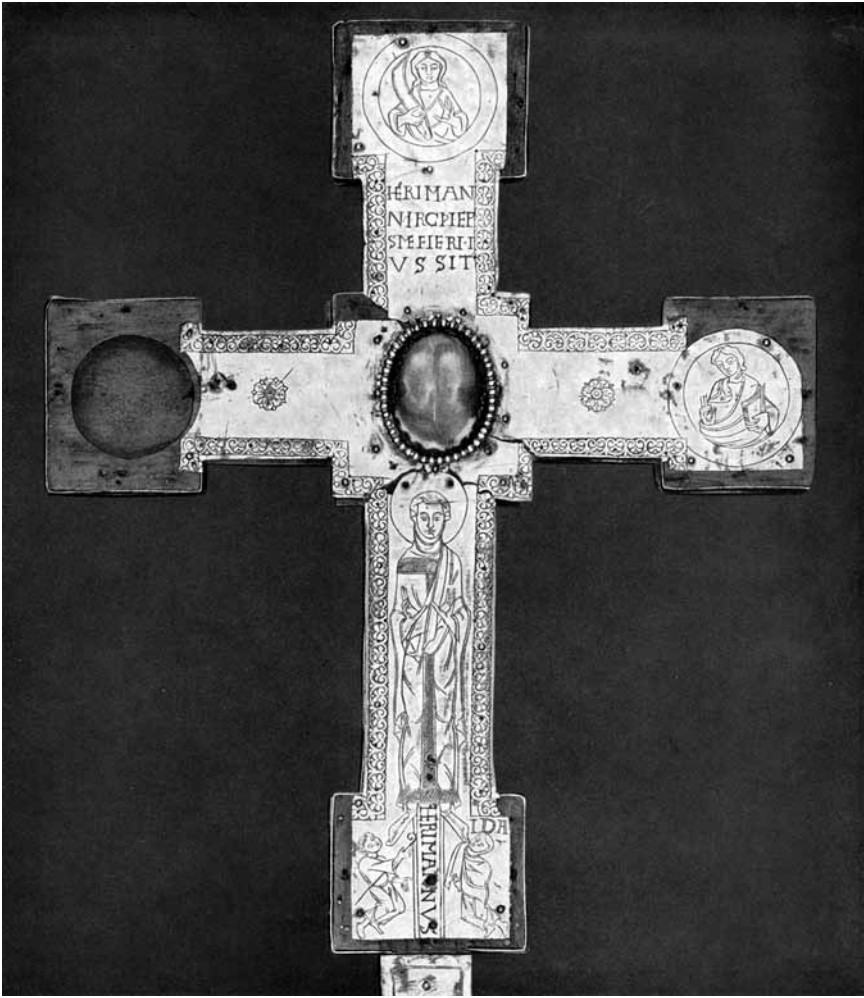


Fig. 5.2 Herimann's Cross, as depicted in H. Schnitzler, *Rheinische Schatzkammer* (Tafelband, pl. 68)

was abbess of the women's foundation of St. Maria im Kapitol. It is because of the verso that the entire ensemble is generally known as "the Herimann Cross" or, more recently, "the Cross of Herimann and Ida".

Herimann's Cross is unique. As a case study, however, it raises the same issues as other ancient figured gems in medieval settings, including trajectory, conversion, *interpretatio christiana*, use or reuse?, and appropriation. These are the rubrics of this essay. My purpose is not to explain Cross of Herimann, but to use the history of its interpretation to think about the status of gems in the discourse of medieval reuse.

The Cross

Herimann's Cross began to emerge as an object of art historical interest with the "Rhine and Meuse" exhibition of 1972. Respecting the division of expertise described here by Arnold Esch (Chapter 1), the catalogue contained two separate studies of it, one by an archaeologist on the date and identity of the cameo, and one by an art historian on the medieval significance of the cross as a whole.⁵ The cameo (Fig. 5.3) – now generally agreed to be an imperial portrait rather than an image of Venus as was believed when Wentzel and Hamann-MacLean were writing – continues to have its own literature, as archaeologists debate whether the features are of Livia (d. 29 CE), Livilla (d. 31), or Antonia the Younger (d. 37); whether it was made as a fully rounded head or a relief; and whether its original use was to be held, worn, or set into a larger object.⁶ This is a separate field of inquiry from the art historical study of the body, which seeks to localize the production of the medieval composite, to understand how it came to be made and how its curious amalgam of elements was perceived.

The art historical explanation of the 1970s used the traditional tools of style, iconography, and historical context to craft a unified account of the object as we have it today: a wooden *Krückenkreuz* (a cross with boxes at the ends of the arms) of a size (33.3 X 28 cm.) and with the fittings (albeit modern) to be carried in processions, having on its front the crucifix and on the rear, in addition to the engravings already mentioned, an inscription stating "Herimann the Archbishop ordered that I be made" (HERIMANN ARCHIEPS ME FIERI IVSSIT); two busts in roundels, thought to represent Virtues; and an oval rock crystal covering a recess for relics. The style of the body of Christ and of the engravings pointed to their manufacture in the abbey at Werden, near Essen where Herimann's and Ida's sister Theophanu (d. 1058) was abbess. The feminine face of the cameo recalled the early Christian iconography of the youthful Christ, which made its placement on the crucifix justifiable but did not fully explain it. The stone must have been of special significance to the donors, and since Herimann and Ida were quasi-royals – children of Mathilde, the daughter of Emperor Otto II and the Byzantine imperial niece Theophanu – the gem could have been a family heirloom. The images of Ida and an orant female identified as the Virgin Mary on the verso of the cross suggested that Herimann had it made for Ida's convent church of St. Maria im Kapitol. The Cross Altar of St. Maria im Kapitol was dedicated by Pope Leo IX on 5 July 1049, and Herimann's gift could have been made for that altar and/or for that event.⁷

5 Bracker-Wester, "Der Christuskopf vom Herimannkreuz"; Wesenberg, "Das Herimannkreuz".

6 Bracker-Wester, "Der Christuskopf vom Herimannkreuz" (Livia); Megow, *Kameen*, p. 289 No. D4 (Antonia minor); Zwierlein-Diehl, "Das Lapislazuli-Köpfchen" (Livilla).

7 Wesenberg, "Das Herimannkreuz".



Fig. 5.3 Herimann's Cross, detail

The unacknowledged (and perhaps unintended) effect of this account was to assimilate the crucifix to the standard interpretation of the reused reliefs on the Arch of Constantine, brilliantly analyzed in this volume by Paolo Liverani (Chapter 2). In both cases, a contemporary image – the portrait of Constantine on the arch, the *corpus* of the crucifix – was made to fit an older artifact, and the joining creates a unified, if oddly doubled representation that ennobles its subject by investing it with the aura of the reused or appropriated part. In the case of the crucifix, a relatively modest image of Christ on the cross is transformed into a memorial of the piety of a noble family by the inclusion of a treasured possession, which was also an imperial heirloom. Not (just) a representation of the suffering Savior, the cameo-crucifix is a self-representation of the donors, without whose participation the presence of the ancient gem is inexplicable.

In the 1970s, art history was unaccustomed to dealing with composite or disjunctive works of art; they were considered “off-putting”. The impetus was to find a single intention or meaning. In the case of Herimann's Cross, the

successful (because satisfying and plausible) unitary explanation required that the front and back sides of the cross were made together, since without Herimann – who appears only on the verso – the crucifix loses not only its name but its context, the cameo loses its pedigree, and the combination of ancient gem and eleventh-century devotional object is once again reduced to curiosity. In fact, as a more recent study readily admits, there is no guarantee that the crucifix and the revetment have a common origin. The oak cross itself is modern and the incised copper sheets do not exactly fit it; moreover, holes visible on the verso indicate that the crucifix was once nailed to that side, partially covering the engravings.⁸ In its present form, the assemblage cannot be traced back farther than the bequest of Johann Anton Friedrich Baudri (d. 1893), suffragan bishop and president of the Christian Art Association for the Archbishopric of Cologne, which founded the archiepiscopal diocesan museum where “Herimann’s Cross” is now housed.

These difficulties notwithstanding, the ensemble continues to be considered “Herimann’s Cross”, and with the rising interest in *spolia* and the multiplication of treasury exhibitions since the 1980s, it is now a celebrity. Recent interpreters tend to exploit features of the cameo that were downplayed in the original interpretation – its color, the portrait features, its age – often to reiterate the same conclusion: as an heirloom of the imperial family, the antique gem represents imperial descent and makes the cross “a document of family solidarity”.⁹ Seeming to contradict the heirloom theory is material evidence that the cameo was once buried, but Erika Zwierlein-Diehl pointed out that both could be true; the gem could have been buried before it was acquired by Herimann’s family.¹⁰ Taking the interpretation in a new direction, Zwierlein-Diehl and Marie-Claire Berkemeier-Favre have demonstrated the susceptibility of the sapphire-blue head to Christian allegorization: it was the color of heaven and thus “a visible expression of the dying Christ’s nearness to heaven”, possibly also a symbol of his godly nature.¹¹

If the art historical explanation seeks to normalize the crucifix by giving it a self-conscious, rational, and clearly definable program, the postmodern discourse of *spolia* points to cultural meanings that were not necessarily so controlled, or even intended. The range of meanings is expanded by the extension of the category “*spolia*” to include anything made before the time of the present setting. Thus Ilene Forsyth’s essay on *spolia* in Ottonian liturgical and treasury objects replaces “antiquity” as the reference point for *spolia* with “history”, arguing that these objects “evoke broad and deep strata of history” through the inclusion of precious ornaments of Roman, earlier medieval, and Islamic manufacture.

8 Surmann, *Das Kreuz Herimanns und Idas*, p. 8.

9 Beuckers, *Die Ezzonen und ihre Stiftungen*, p. 212.

10 Zwierlein-Diehl, “Das Lapislazuli-Köpfchen am Herimannkreuz”, p. 387.

11 Berkemeier-Favre, “Das Schöne ist zeitlos”; Zwierlein-Diehl, “Das Lapislazuli-Köpfchen am Herimannkreuz”, p. 393.

In the case of Herimann's Cross, the ancient gem worked in concert with early Christian and Byzantine allusions in the environment of St. Maria im Kapitol to induce "a whole range of references, one building on the other, none limited to Rome alone, and the whole depending for its ultimate meaning on the contemporary as well as the cumulative effect of these associations".¹² Implicitly invoking the literal sense of *spolia*, Forsyth posited a triumphalist message in these accumulations, "a triumph of the whole over its own component parts, the present over its varied past". Karen Rose Mathews' study of the use of *spolia* by King (and future emperor) Henry II (1002–14), which mentions Herimann's Cross in passing, is more inflected by the literature of the social sciences, proposing that as "appropriated objects", *spolia* functioned in the Ottonian economies of cultural and symbolic capital, as treasure and commodities, as well as in the more familiar role of the formation of imperial identity.¹³

Spolia

The use of the word *spolia* to apply to gems is sometimes just a matter of convenience, especially in English, which, unlike Italian (*reimpieghi*), French (*remplois*), and German (*Wiederverwendungen*), has no single word to denote "things that have been reused". Medieval people would have found the usage perplexing. In their lexicon, *spolia* still denoted possessions taken by force, and gems were prime *spolia*. Rival kings and chieftains seized them from one another; Christians took them from Muslims and vice versa; secular powers robbed them from churches and monasteries. In this respect, the Middle Ages was no different from Roman antiquity. According to Pliny, the Roman craze for gemstones began with the processions of *spolia* captured from Hellenistic kingdoms in the first century BCE. A "ring cabinet" (*dactyliothecam*) of King Mithridates VI was offered to Capitoline Jupiter, and Julius Caesar later placed six such cabinets in the Temple of Venus Genetrix.¹⁴ Roman gods liked *spolia*; they were proof of their own efficacy and power. It was a concomitantly grievous offense to despoil them. Cicero described Verres' confiscation of a gemmed lamp-stand intended for the Capitoline Temple of Jupiter as an international disgrace to the Roman people as well as a crime against the god.¹⁵ Not long before the sack of Rome in 410, according to Zosimus, the Christian empress Serena insulted the goddess Cybele by taking a jewel from the neck of her statue. The empress was punished with dreams and visions of death, and ultimately she was strangled.¹⁶

12 Forsyth, "Art with History", p. 154.

13 Mathews, "Expressing Political Legitimacy".

14 Pliny, *Natural History* 37.5.

15 Cicero, *Against Verres* 2.4.27–32.

16 Zosimus, *New History* 5.38.

In a Christian reversal of the story of Serena, Bernard of Angers described the virgin saint Foy torturing her devotees with dreams and visions until they gave her the rings and bracelets she desired.¹⁷ But while Foy might “wrest” (*extorserit*) a ring from a reluctant worshipper, this was not and could not be called spoliation.¹⁸ *Spoliare* was used of pirates, thieves, impious or greedy lords, and sometimes to denote the unfortunate necessity of “stripping” altars and treasuries to fund capital or other expenses. Churches were considered despoiled when rulers confiscated their precious goods for redistribution, as when King Henry II took the goods of “many places” to enrich his foundation at Bamberg, or William Rufus (1087–1100) gave the spoils – reliquaries, crosses, Gospel books, and “ornaments” – of the English church at Waltham to Norman Caen.¹⁹

Spoliation creates winners and losers. St. Foy’s seizure of jewelry was not spoliation because the donors were persuaded that they had gained spiritually in proportion to their material losses; the transactions between them and St. Foy, albeit coerced, were gifts. In the ideological economy of Christian salvation, both parties were enriched by the exchange. In contrast, the community at Waltham felt robbed by the benefactions to the churches of Caen. In the Waltham version of events:

[William Rufus] believed that the spoils of Waltham church would provide sure salvation for the souls of his father and mother lying at rest at Caen, if the altar there were adorned from the other altar at Waltham, dismembered as it were. It was as though the limbs of one’s own true son were being cut off and offered as an acceptable and very precious gift to someone else’s father.²⁰

The objects donated to Caen were gifts (to Waltham) before they were *spolia*, and they were *spolia* before again becoming gifts from William Rufus to Caen. The community at Waltham privileged one moment in this trajectory; Caen privileged another. We might say that both were right, but to medievals, the alternatives were emphatically mutually exclusive.

Trajectory

Trajectories occur within economies. The seminal study by Arjun Appadurai concerned commodities and the trajectories of things into and out of commodity status. Luxury items like gems tend to evade commodification, however; they are “incarnated signs”; “goods whose principal use is rhetorical

17 *The Book of the Miracles of St. Foy* 1.16–22, in *The Book of Sainte Foy*.

18 Robertini (ed.), *Liber miraculorum Sancte Fidis*, p. 121.

19 Lehmann-Brockhaus, *Lateinische Schriftquellen*, vol. 2, p. 594 No. 4485; Feger (ed. and trans.), *Die Chronik des Klosters Petershausen*, pp. 90–91.

20 Watkiss and Chibnall (ed. and trans.), *The Waltham Chronicle*, p. 59.

and social".²¹ In the Middle Ages, the trajectories of gems might include gifting, inheritance, spoliation, thesaurization, and entombment. All of these possibilities appear in *Beowulf*, a poem about a Germanic pagan hero written down by a Christian a generation or two before Herimann and Ida were born. To cite just one example, the neck ring given to Beowulf by Wealhtheow is simultaneously a pledge of friendship, a talisman, an heirloom, and a battle spoil (ll. 1191–1214). Beowulf re-gifts the ring to Queen Hygd to wear as an adornment, or so the poet "heard" (ll. 2172–6). Without the poet's hearing, without his voice to narrate them, the histories of such objects, and with them their cumulative metonymic relationships to ancestors, heroes, and allies, would be lost.

The economy of prestige goods is generally the same from one culture to another: as wealth, they facilitate the accrual, distribution, and transmission of power; as representations of wealth, they maintain or assert power through its display. In these fundamental respects, the economy of the archaic pagan world of *Beowulf* was no different from that of the Christian clerical world of Herimann and Ida; nor was their economy different from that of the more secular world of late Rome, from which many of their prestige objects were inherited.²² In all of these contexts, the circulation of prestige goods by means of gift, bequest, purchase, theft, or seizure sustained or disrupted social hierarchies, defining and constituting their élites. In all of these economies, gems and gold combined to give the highest material value to prestige items, including dress, jewelry, furniture, vessels, and weapons.

Trajectories take objects from production to consumption. Often the "production pole" is indeterminate, but in the case of figured gems, it is encoded in technical and iconographic features of the imagery.²³ From these features, modern archaeologists can read out the time and place of manufacture of an antique cameo to within a reign or even a decade, as in the case of the blue head of Herimann's Cross. This form of consumption requires knowledge commensurate with that invested in the gem when it was made. In the Middle Ages, the knowledge gap was much greater, even though the temporal distance between production and consumption poles was shorter than it is today. Like some modern inter-cultural consumers, therefore, medieval consumers of ancient cameos tended to mythologize their origins. Both Gervase of Tilbury (d. 1228) and Albertus Magnus (d. 1280) ascribed the production of images on gems to non-manual (psychological or astrological) forces. According to Gervase, the etymology of *capmahu* (cameo) is *caput* (head) + *manhu*, an exclamation of wonder (as in "oh! there's a head!").²⁴ This

21 Appadurai, "Introduction", p. 38.

22 Henig, "*Luxuria and Decorum*".

23 Production pole: Appadurai, "Introduction", p. 41.

24 Banks and Binns (ed. and trans.), *Gervase of Tilbury Otia imperialia* 3.28; Zwierlein-Diehl, "*Interpretatio christiana*", p. 71.

is not to say that medieval consumers – especially literate ones like Herimann and Ida – did not recognize sardonyx, amethyst, chalcedony, and other stones carved with the images of pagan gods or emperors as Roman. But their Rome was a mythical space where wonders were normal, not the reasoned array of dates and facts it is for us.

Conversion

Within the larger pattern of trajectories, objects may have singular biographies. The stages in these biographies are rarely encoded in the object; they exist in supplements, like the oral traditions of *Beowulf* or the parchment documents that accompanied donations to churches. Biographies added value, placing the contemporary possessor of an heirloom in a genealogy of heroic, saintly, or high-born predecessors, or documenting the origin of a trophy or gift. Gems could have quite eventful biographies. For example, the jewels with which Abbot Suger decorated the great crucifix of Saint-Denis came from two cups owned by King Henry I of England (1100–35), which had been seized by Stephen of Blois with the rest of the king's treasury when the king died. Stephen gave them to his older brother Thibault, Count of Blois and Champagne, who had better claim to the throne; in other words, they were *spolia*, returned to their rightful owner as a bribe. In thanks for a favor, Count Thibault broke up the cups and gave them to Bernard of Clairvaux to sell in order to finance the building of new Cistercian monasteries. Bernard (or his representative) offered them to Abbot Suger, who was known to be in the market for precious ornaments, and Suger was happy to buy them for the very large sum of 400 pounds.²⁵ According to Christopher Norton, the mechanism of this trajectory was a secular diplomatic negotiation in which both abbots, Bernard and Suger, were involved. Suger represented it very differently, however, as a “delightful but excellent miracle”, by which, “giving thanks to God”, he acquired a bounty of hyacinths, sapphires, rubies, emeralds, and topazes from the treasures of King Henry, “through the hands” of King Stephen, from the alms of Count Thibault. Unlike William Rufus, Suger may have had doubts about God's pleasure in receiving *spolia* from a Christian source, even at two removes.

When they were known, biographies like those of King Henry's gems or the Eleanor Vase, also acquired by Abbot Suger, established mutually beneficial “memorial networks” that ennobled the consumption pole of the trajectory – the final recipient in a chain of bestowals or bequests – and complimented the memory of the donors.²⁶ It did not always follow that these genealogies

25 Norton, “Bernard, Suger”.

26 Beech, “The Eleanor of Aquitaine Vase”; Buc, “Conversion of Objects”.

continued to determine the object's significance. Witness the very large sardonyx cameo with a Roman emperor in the guise of Aesculapius that was given to the abbey of St. Alban by King Ethelred (991–1016), whose name was inscribed on its mount. If given before 1005, it would have been among the “noble carved stones” and gems that Abbot Leofric kept to someday decorate the shrine of St. Alban, when everything else in the treasury was sold to feed the poor during a famine.²⁷ When it was drawn and described by Matthew Paris in the thirteenth century (Fig. 5.4), however, the cameo was renowned not for this genealogy but for its power to protect women in childbirth. Placed between the breasts of the birthing mother and then moved slowly toward her “nether regions”, the gem caused the baby to flee before it, out of the womb.²⁸ Perhaps its ability to terrorize the unborn child had something to do with its imagery, which Matthew describes as a “ragged man” holding a spear in one hand and a little boy in the other.²⁹

Philippe Buc dubbed the endpoint of these biographies – the object's translation from a profane social life into the possession of a church – conversion. Conversion might entail physical transformation, as with the pagan idol melted down to form a chalice or the wine from donated land used for the eucharist, but not necessarily. The gemstones in the rings of King Louis VII, lesser secular lords, archbishops and bishops that were presented to the altar of the Holy Martyrs at Saint-Denis would not have been changed when set into the altar's new frontal, any more than the stones from the bracelets and rings that were relinquished to St. Foy and wound up in the covering of her statue.³⁰ As Buc defined it, conversion was a political event. It both stood for and produced a relationship of inequality; in its new use, the gift instantiated the acceptance of a hierarchical order in which the ecclesiastical recipient was at the top. As recognized also by the devotees of St. Foy, divine favor required a display of sacrifice to the institution through which it was channeled. The sacrifice would be rewarded with commemorative recommendations, so converted objects were vehicles of memory, whether or not they survived conversion in their original form.

Interpretatio christiana

Conversion is not the same as exorcism, consecration, or *interpretatio christiana*, all of which effected changes to the object. Exorcism is a cleansing ritual, like

27 Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art*, p. 108.

28 Wright, “On Antiquarian Excavations”, p. 445; Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, pp. 45–8.

29 Zwierlein-Diehl, “*Interpretatio christiana*”, p. 70.

30 Panofsky (ed. and trans.), *Abbot Suger*, pp. 106–7.

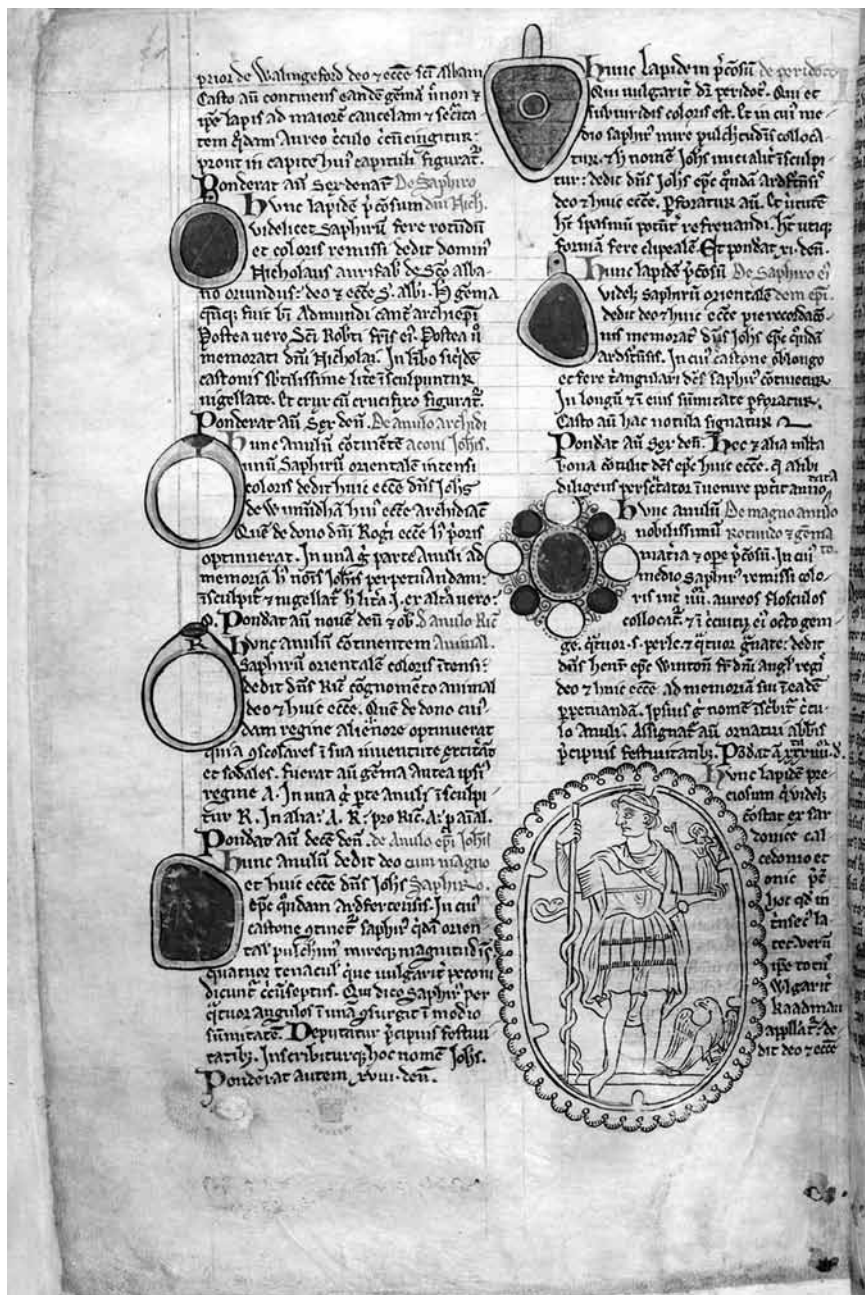


Fig. 5.4 The cameo of St. Alban's drawn by Matthew Paris

baptism. It was produced by blessing. Several benedictions to be said over “vessels made by the art of the Gentiles” are known, for example:

God, who cleansed all things for the faithful by the coming of your son our Lord, attend propitiously to our prayers, and cleanse also by the abundance of your grace these vessels, which have been taken from the depths of the earth after a span of time by the indulgence of your mercy, and *returned to the uses of men*.³¹

The last phrase should be read against the final episode of *Beowulf*, in which a treasure buried by the last survivor of “a highborn race” is disturbed, first by a common thief, and then by Beowulf himself. Calamity ensues. The hero is slain, and the thanes rebury the ill-omened treasure with him:

They let the ground keep that ancestral treasure,
gold under gravel, gone to earth,
as useless to men now as it ever was (ll. 3166–8).

Evidently the hoard was a ritual deposit protected by a religious taboo; it was never again to be used.³² Violating the taboo unleashed great trouble for the Geats. Exorcism liberated objects from such dangerous spells or habitation by un-Christian spirits, making it possible for Christians to use them without fear of punishment or contamination.

Consecration did the opposite, adding power to objects rather than neutralizing or expelling it. In the description of it by Gervase of Tilbury, the consecration of gems appears to be a Christian rationalization of the ancient belief in the medicinal and other powers of rare stones that went back to the late Hellenistic period. This quasi-scientific, quasi-magical tradition was transmitted through the Middle Ages by a series of treatises “on stones”, which was represented in the eleventh century by the *De lapidibus* of Marbode of Rennes, probably composed before 1090.³³ Marbode introduced his work as coming from “Evax”, King of Arabia, who wrote it down for Tiberius, the successor of Augustus (ll. 1–2). It was “secret” lore, which Marbode professed to be passing on to “a few friends” (l. 7; since there are 125 surviving manuscripts, the secret must have got out quickly!). Every stone had its own *virtus*, a set of powers that constituted its particular “personality”.³⁴ According to this wisdom, sapphire – as lapis lazuli was known in the eleventh century – is the “gem of gems”, “fit only for the fingers of kings”; it fends off treachery and enables its wearer to escape from prison; it also cools the innards and reduces enervating sweat; heals ulcers; and if dissolved in milk clears up

31 Wright, “On Antiquarian Excavations”, p. 440; Krämer, “Zur Wiederverwendung antiker Gefäße”, p. 328.

32 Tarzia, “The Hoarding Ritual”.

33 Riddle, *Marbode of Rennes’ De lapidibus*, p. 2.

34 Riddle, *Marbode of Rennes’ De lapidibus*, p. 5.

cloudy eyes and relieves headache. To enjoy these powers the wearer of sapphire must maintain perfect chastity, however (ll. 103–29).

Gervase, in the more specific and analytical mode of the thirteenth century, informed his emperor (Otto IV, 1209–15) that many stones have intrinsic powers due to their nature (*Recreation for an Emperor* 3.28: *intrinsecam ... uirtutem plerique lapides habent a sua natura insitam*), and these powers can be enhanced with extrinsic ones through consecration:

There is no precious stone which may not be consecrated for the exercise of its extrinsic power with the herb of the same name or with the blood of a bird or animal, combined with spells, knowledge of which has come down to us through Solomon ... Words, herbs, and precious stones customarily bring as many remedies to human beings as are fitting, pleasing, or necessary to our human nature; but it is not the stones or their engravings that accomplish these things, it is not the herbs or their couplings: it is God, the supreme author of all that is, who accomplishes all these remedies through the words, the herbs, and the stones. An engraving is a sign of his power and is not powerful in itself. The quality imposed on a stone by the words of consecration extends and endorses its innate potency.³⁵

According to Gervase, if it has been “adjured” (a term also used for exorcism), sapphire can “increase and preserve” the power of the powerful (*potestatem potentis*) and the affluence – the flowing of wealth to – the already rich.

Incidentally (to anticipate our return to Herimann’s Cross), these passages make clear how severely our understanding is compromised by our ignorance of the biography of the crucifix’s lapis lazuli head. If the gem were found in the ground of Cologne, or elsewhere, and converted by a churchman – Herimann or another – for placement in the crucifix, the gift would have represented the renunciation of a potential prestige good by a cleric who had (at least in theory) renounced worldly power and well-being anyway. If, on the other hand, the gem came from a royal or imperial treasury, whether directly or through intermediaries like the jewels of King Henry of England sold to Abbot Suger, the conversion would have constituted the deliberate removal of a potent asset from the economy of secular power; even, perhaps, a removal intended to deprive a specific secular power of its use. Unless we recover knowledge of the circumstances, we can never fully appreciate the topical significance of the cameo-crucifix in its originating milieu.

Unlike exorcism or consecration, *interpretatio christiana* neither cleansed nor empowered. As used by art historians, *interpretatio christiana* mostly refers to iconography, but it also covers the Christian allegorization of materials. With respect to imagery, *interpretatio christiana* is renaming, or un-naming. Renaming could be effected by inscription, as when a chalcedony cameo double portrait of the Emperor Honorius and his wife Maria (398–407) was inscribed, in Greek, “St. Sergius” and “St. Bacchus”, thereby becoming a portrait of those

35 Banks and Binns (ed. and trans.), *Gervase of Tilbury Otia imperialia*, pp. 615–17.

two (male!) saints.³⁶ Renaming was not a requirement, however, as evidenced by the countless uninscribed gems with Roman imagery on the liturgical implements, Gospel books and reliquaries in medieval church treasuries. In western Europe, virtually any precious object, if given with a pure heart and good intentions, could be converted as it was. To cite just one of dozens of possible examples, a first-century sardonyx cantharos decorated with Dionysiac masks and implements (the “Cup of the Ptolemies”) was fitted with a worked gold foot and “consecrated” (*dicavit*) to the abbey of Saint-Denis “in faithful conscience” (“[*devota*] *mente*”) by a ruler identified as Charles the Bald (840–77). The cup was used as a chalice into the eighteenth century. Erika Zwierlein-Diehl observed that even in the early modern period, descriptions of it overlooked the Dionysiac significance of the imagery and noted only the presence of trees, heads, animals and birds.³⁷

To judge from the sources available, un-naming was the habitual medieval approach to non-Christian imagery. This is how Matthew Paris described the birth-aiding cameo of St. Albans (Fig. 5.4):

a certain tattered image [*imago*], holding in its right hand a spear on which a serpent creeps upward, and in the left hand a clothed boy holding some kind of shield on his shoulder and extending his other hand toward the image.³⁸

Whether the author’s “loss of iconographical literacy” was real or strategic, his description remains rigorously on the “pre-iconographic” level of Panofsky’s famous schema of interpretation: that is, on the level of motifs recognizable through basic human experience.³⁹ No conventional meanings are recognized or admitted; there simply is no iconography.

Medieval consumers did not need to know the conventions of Roman iconography, although, of course, they sometimes did. Un-naming was a means of appropriation; it made objects with images available for new owners to use them. Sometimes, as with the Cup of the Ptolemies, un-naming deflected attention from figural decoration so that viewers could focus on the material. Material and color were almost always more valued than imagery, to the extent that figured gems were sometimes turned inward in medieval settings, which rendered the carving invisible.⁴⁰ In other cases, un-naming produced natural forms that could be “invested”, in Panofsky’s term, with new content.⁴¹ If Charlemagne needed a seal ring, it was enough to find a gem with the carving of a bearded male head. Whether the male had the attributes

36 Mango and Mango, “Cameos in Byzantium”, p. 62.

37 Zwierlein-Diehl, *Antike Gemmen*, pp. 259–60.

38 Wright, “On Antiquarian Excavations”, p. 445 n.k.

39 Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, p. 9; on Matthew’s iconographical literacy: Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 48.

40 Krug, “Antike Gemmen an mittelalterlichen Goldschmiedearbeiten”, pp. 117–18.

41 Kinney, “Interpretatio christiana”.

of a Roman general or of the god Serapis was of no consequence; both could serve, and both may have been considered Charlemagne's portraits. Medusa could become the Virgin Mary for the seal of Bishop Bernward of Hildesheim (d. 1022), and so on through numerous examples.⁴² It is thus not so surprising that a sapphire face with soft, innocent-looking features could be put into service as Christ.

Use or Reuse?

Anthony Cutler challenged the habit of terming all objects in secondary settings "reused" by distinguishing reuse from "use", defined as the incorporation or employment of something old with a view to a need in the present. "Reuse", by contrast, would be the self-consciously historicist deployment of a heritage object in order to refer to the past.⁴³ Cutler thus situated "reuse" in the realm of authorial intention and its appreciation by the target audience. On these criteria the placement of the Roman cameo on "Herimann's" crucifix must be considered reuse, at least according to the prevailing interpretation that casts it as a representation, or "staging", of the lineage of Herimann and Ida and their prerogatives.

We can complement Cutler's analysis by framing the distinction in terms of the more readily observable criteria of practice, that is, of continuities and innovations in how an object or class of objects is employed over time. If I inherit a cooking pot from my grandmother and prepare meals in it night after night, by the criterion of practice I am using it. I might prefer to use it because of its associations with her, or because I believe old pots work better, or because I can't afford to buy a new pot as strong and large as her old one; whatever the congeries of reasons that might be described as my intention, the pot is still doing what it was made to do originally. If, on the other hand, I decide that the pot is too heavy, too clumsy, too pretty, too fragile, or too rare to use for cooking and instead plant flowers in it, I have reused it. The pot has taken on a new function, different from the one its maker intended for it.

From the perspective of practice, the use of gems is remarkably stable. Because of their rare and hard-won materials, they are sought-after and valuable in any economy. They are collected or hoarded, because while one gem could be an accident, many gems signify wealth and status. They are worn by people or objects; gem-encrusted implements and furniture are metonymies for the gem-encrusted people who own or use them. They are passed on to chosen successors or descendants, who will use them in exactly the same way. When Emperor Honorius married Maria in 398, he bestowed

42 Zwiernlein-Diehl, *Antike Gemmen*, pp. 253–6.

43 Cutler, "Use or Reuse?"

upon her the *ornatus*, the gems and other regalia that had been worn by Livia 400 years before.⁴⁴ Those same gems may have been worn by empresses in Byzantium 400 years later. It is an astonishing testimony to the perdurance of the Roman imperial office that so many of the great “state cameos” cut in the time of the Julio-Claudians survived in perfect condition for over a millennium, presumably in Constantinople, until they began to find their way into western church treasuries in the thirteenth century.⁴⁵ The magnificent sardonyx cameo portrait of Augustus set into the center of the Lothar Cross in Aachen around 1000 (Fig. 5.5) was an early arrival; it may have been a diplomatic gift to Otto I on the occasion of the marriage of his son to the niece of Emperor John I Tzimisces, Theophanu, in 972, or it may have been in Theophanu’s trousseau.⁴⁶ This is the same treasure that many believe was the source of the lapis lazuli cameo on “Herimann’s” crucifix.

In the face of such continuity, one could propose that the thousands of antique gems set in the precious metal coverings of medieval crosses, book covers, vessels, and reliquaries were not reused, but used. At some level, there is no difference between a gemmed candelabrum made for a Roman temple and a gemmed altar frontal made for a Benedictine abbey church. Yet on another level, the conversion of intaglio sealing stones from the rings of bishops and potentates into altar ornaments seems like reuse. Surely turning the portrait of an empress into the face of Jesus was reuse, as it was reuse to place a portrait of Augustus in a cross where it might serve as the image of another emperor, or of Christ.⁴⁷ Figured gems are thus a subset of “gems”. They offered the possibility of reuse by Christians in the form of reinterpretation. Figuration was an opportunity for creative redeployment; figured gems were ready-mades, waiting to be transformed by recontextualization.

Appropriation

In a brilliant, wide-ranging study of the uses of classical art in the West in the Middle Ages, Salvatore Settis asked how the mythological imagery on ancient Roman sarcophagi was “read” by the Christians who used the sarcophagi for their own burial and by the sculptors who copied the reliefs for their own compositions. He concluded that, when the precise meaning of individual myths had faded with time and cultural distance, the imagery came to represent antiquity itself.

44 Claudian, *Epithalamium*, 10–13.

45 Zwierlein-Diehl, *Antike Gemmen*, pp. 237–48.

46 Megow, *Kameen*, p. 155 No. A9.

47 Wibiral, “Augustus patrem figurat”.



Fig. 5.5 The Lothar Cross

Having lost ... every precise reference to myths and themes that once were generally understood, the sarcophagus reliefs could have spoken the generic, indistinct language of a past age populated by extraordinary, unnamed figures of gods and heroes, with broad dramatic gestures and ample, agitated drapery. And so we might say that every sarcophagus wound up telling the story of Orestes

or of Phaedra, since no one knew the stories any more; but perhaps precisely for this reason every sarcophagus condensed, in its crowds of figures in motion, something *more* than those stories. From one piece in a series it tended to become, by its rarity, the indefiniteness of its meaning and the difficulty of making it out, an *exemplum* capable of representing the very face of antiquity.⁴⁸

Like sarcophagi – and unlike the architectural elements discussed by several authors in this volume, as well as by Maria Fabricius Hansen in her book on *spolia* and appropriation – gems are self-sufficient objects.⁴⁹ They were made to function independently in a variety of possible settings. Their original context was not the physical matrix of a wall or building but a series of like objects fabricated for similar uses. Destruction of this context was a cultural, not a physical event, and its agent was time. Orphaned by time, figured gems and sarcophagi could continue to serve their original functions. For the medieval user, a precious stone with an intaglio image was a seal, just as it had been for the Roman who first wore it. For the medieval owner, however, the image no longer signified participation in the system of religious, cultural or political relationships in which it was meaningful originally. The image signified antiquity.

In Jean Baudrillard's "system of objects," antiques are "mythological" in another sense:

The way in which antiques refer to the past gives them an *exclusively* mythological character. The antique object no longer has any practical application, its role being merely to *signify* ... Yet it is not afunctional, nor purely "decorative", for it has a very specific function within the system, namely the signifying of time.⁵⁰

Antiques represent a return to origins, to a state of completion and unity. They both instantiate and elude appropriation:

Mythological objects ... serve less as possessions than as symbolic intercessors – as ancestors, so to speak, than which nothing is more "private". They are a way of escaping from everyday life, and no escape is more radical than escape in time ... The antique ... remains in all cases "perfect"; it is neither internal nor external, but "elsewhere"; neither synchronic nor diachronic, but *anachronistic*; relative to its possessor, it is neither the complement of the verb "to be" nor the object of a verb "to have", but falls, rather, into the grammatical category of an internal object that gives expression to the essence of the verb in an almost tautological manner.⁵¹

48 Settis, "Continuità, distanza, conoscenza", pp. 409–10.

49 Fabricius Hansen, *The Eloquence of Appropriation*.

50 Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, pp. 73–4.

51 Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, p. 80.

Conclusion

Baudrillard's theory is explicitly addressed to the "pullulation of objects" in the modern industrial world; yet many of his observations about antiques hold true for other times and cultures, and also apply to *spolia*. *Spolia* are always inevitably anachronistic with respect to their resettings; they are always "elsewhere" with respect to the work or site where we encounter them. It is the disjunctive reality of spoliage compositions like Herimann's Cross or the Arch of Constantine that has made them "off-putting" or displeasing to post-medieval interpreters. It is not only that they disrupt our aesthetic expectations. Anachronistic couplings are uncanny.

The challenge of *spolia* studies is to see anachronism without reducing it to iconography. Richard Hamann-MacLean, who was the first, as far as I know, to discuss the Cross of Herimann as *spolia*, managed to do this, finding in the combination of the ancient head and the medieval body "the timeless *numen* of a noble material in a remarkable form" that gave the whole an "incomparable radiance and mystery":

It is a form of reified mystery. Therein lies the secret of the effect of this cross and the specific character of this era's particular relationship to antiquity.⁵²

Later scholarship moved away from this quasi-confessional form of explanation toward more objective interpretations grounded in the supposed connection with Herimann and Ida. Such accounts unify the gem and its setting by defining the whole as the product of more or less rational motives of self-representation. The treatment of the gem as a figurative *spolium* with connotations of antiquity and/or political and social prerogatives tames anachronism by making it a vehicle of deliberate expression. Even the fact that the head is female has been rationalized by the claim that medieval viewers saw it as simply youthful. Very recently, however, Veronika Wiegartz questioned this last claim and with it, the purely programmatic understanding of the reused head:

The precious object as such must have been the occasion of its use, without the need to undertake an excessive reflection on content. Why should the medieval observer not have felt the peculiar effect of the head and recognized the resulting departure from the norm as an expensive curiosity, as is still the case today?⁵³

Antje Krug has argued that medieval consumers of ancient gems were well aware of the contradictions and even the absurdities posed by their desire for antique gems as status symbols and the uses to which they were put.⁵⁴ Why,

52 Hamann-MacLean, "Antikenstudium", p. 166.

53 Wiegartz, *Antike Bildwerke im Urteil mittelalterlicher Zeitgenossen*, pp. 225–6.

54 Krug, "Antike Gemmen und das Zeitalter Bernwards".

she asked, should we not imagine learned clerics “roaring with laughter” at the use of a naked Omphale for the seal-ring of an archdeacon? Presumably no one laughed at Herimann’s Cross; but that does not mean that the contradiction between the nameless blue female face and the body of the son of God was invisible or overlooked. In medieval studies, the potential of *spolia* as sites of such unsettling difference seems a likely new frontier.⁵⁵

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Appropriation as Inscription: Making History in the First Friday Mosque of Delhi

Finbarr Barry Flood

The essence of the monument is paradoxically its lack of monumental stability
... and therefore its inability to offer a return rather than a new journey.

Don Fowler, *Roman Constructions: Readings in Postmodern Latin* (Oxford, 2000), 211.

Introduction

The reuse of architectural elements was ubiquitous in those parts of the premodern Islamic world (primarily Anatolia, Egypt, Syria, and north India) where stone was the principal medium of construction. In modern scholarship, the phenomenon of reuse – especially across what are thought of as cultural frontiers – is usually explained either in economic terms (as a pragmatic undertaking) or in ideological terms (as an expression of the triumph of Islam).¹ In this, as in its marginalization of aesthetic considerations, scholarship on reuse in premodern monuments built for Muslim patrons is comparable to that dealing with the recycling of “pagan” materials in early Christian or Byzantine monuments.² A major difference, however, is the way

1 A critique and relevant bibliography can be found in Flood, “Medieval Trophy” and “Image Against Nature”.

2 In addition to the references given below, see Saradi, “Use of Ancient Spolia”; Papalexandrou, “Memory Tattered and Torn”. A further point of comparison is a recent interest in the ascription of a talismanic value to reused materials, which broadens the frame of analysis. For exemplary approaches to the recycling of Pharaonic and Byzantine materials in medieval and early modern Egyptian mosques, see Meinecke-Berg, “Spolien in der mittelalterlichen Architektur”; Jakeman, “Abstract Art and Communication”; Barrucand,

in which essentialist notions of Islam in general, and a penchant for iconoclasm in particular, have inflected discussions of reuse in Islamic contexts.

The early Islamic architecture of South Asia provides particularly well-documented case studies of appropriation, recycling, and reuse and the ways in which they have been represented in modern scholarship. In discussions of these phenomena, one monument holds center-stage: the Qutb Mosque, the first Friday Mosque (*jāmi' masjid*) of Delhi. Construction of the mosque began in 1192, after the conquest of north India by a Muslim sultanate based in the central Afghan region of Ghur (and hence known as the Ghurid dynasty), an event often referred to as the “Muslim” conquest of north India. The mosque and its adjacent minaret, the Qutb Minar, begun around 1199, were celebrated as wonders by thirteenth- and fourteenth-century chroniclers and geographers writing in Arabic and Persian as far away as Egypt and Syria. Their enduring fame is reflected by their pre-eminence among the tourist attractions of Delhi until today.

Many of the stones from which the Qutb Mosque was constructed were recycled from earlier monuments. In modern scholarship, these materials are often referred to as “Hindu” or “Jain” materials, an identification that highlights four interrelated (if rarely explicit) assumptions that pervade most modern discussions of premodern architectural appropriation. The first assumption is a metonymic relationship between recycled elements and the broader cultural formations that they are made to stand for. Secondly, the identities manifest in cultural artifacts and forms are invariably imagined as singular, and often sectarian. Third, there is often an assumption that identity is not only singular, but also fixed at a valorized moment of creation that represents the Ur-moment of a work: hence references to “Christian” or “Hindu” objects reused in “Islamic” monuments, an assertion of synchronic identities even within diachronic analyses. Finally, secondary or tertiary deployments of architectural materials are often seen not only as temporally posterior to a canonical original state, but as anti-canonical deformations or derogations of this pristine state, and the cultural values that it manifests. The travails of artifacts, materials, and monuments across time are thus comparable to the degeneration of cultural forms transmitted across space in diffusionist models of cultural transmission.

These assumptions notwithstanding, monuments no less than their makers have complex biographies, which often entail radical shifts in appearance, function, and meaning, as both the papers in this volume and the history of the Qutb Mosque make clear. In an earlier series of essays, I have explored the way in which the Qutb Mosque was appropriated by and for colonial and post-colonial scholarship, a theme also explored in this volume by Mrinalini

“Les chapiteaux de remploi”; Heiden, “Symbolische Verwendung pharaonischer Spolien” and “Pharaonische Baumaterialien”.

Rajagopalan.³ Here I want to draw attention to the appropriation of the site by those vying for political authority and power in north India during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The continuing success of these premodern appropriations is manifest in their legacy to modern scholarship. As I hope to demonstrate, the topic is not only of regional interest, but has significant implications for histories and theories of appropriation.

Appropriation as Displacement

Modern visitors to the Qutb Mosque in Delhi approach it through a narrow high-stepped rectangular entrance that projects from a rather plain façade (Fig. 6.1). To the left of the entrance, standing outside the south-eastern corner of the mosque, is the looming presence of the Qutb Minar, a massive red sandstone tower standing over two hundred feet high, visible long before the visitor reaches the complex (Figs. 6.2 and 6.5). The unprepossessing entrance to the mosque does not prepare the visitor for the riot of richly-carved stone ornament that he or she experiences stepping inside it, a visual cacophony (Fig. 6.3) whose density and impact are rendered all the more dramatic by juxtaposition with the large empty space of the courtyard that lies at its heart.

When complete, the mosque measured 147.5 by 47 ft, conforming to a long-established architectural template in which a narrow *riwāq* or arcade surrounded a rectangular court on three sides, with a multi-bayed prayer hall located at the end of the courtyard that faced Mecca, which from Delhi lies roughly to the west (Fig. 6.4). The prayer hall is preceded by a monumental arched screen added in 594/1198, the surface of which is among the most lavishly ornamented in the mosque, carved with floral and epigraphic ornament, including extensive citations from the Qur'an (Fig. 6.6).

In addition to the main eastern entrance, the mosque was provided with two lateral stepped entrances at the center of its northern and southern sides (Fig. 6.4). In all three cases, monumental corbelled domes were set within the arcades at the point where the entrances opened into them. Additional corbelled domes spanned the space of the prayer hall. The corbelled domes and the flat slabs roofing the mosque were supported on trabeate beams borne by pillars composed of discrete sections set vertically on end to achieve the required height. The range of styles among the constituent materials (Fig. 6.3) indicates a synthesis of antique stones and reused twelfth-century materials with newly carved stones that often emulate the style of the reused material. Some of the materials in the Qutb Mosque are comparable in style to those used in Hindu temples of the eighth or ninth centuries in Gujarat and Rajasthan

3 Flood, "Signs of Violence" and "Lost in Translation".

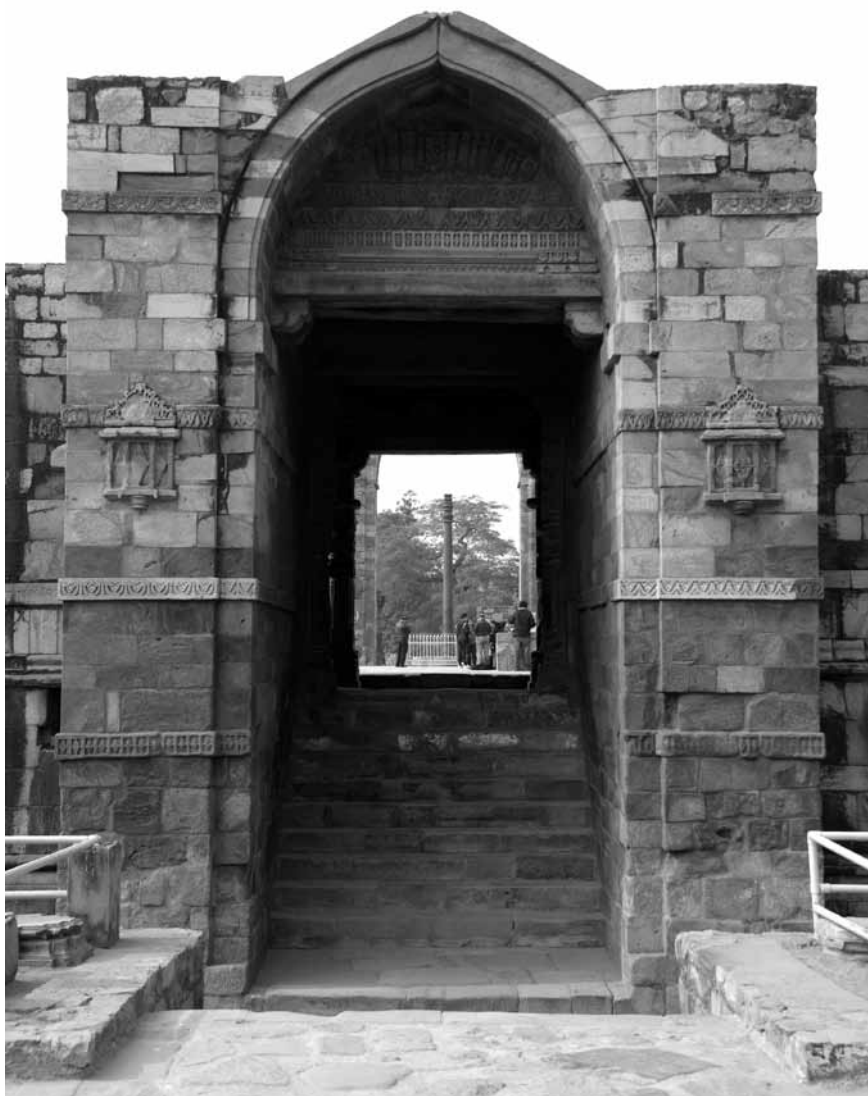


Fig. 6.1 Eastern entrance to the Qutb Mosque, its lintels inscribed with Persian historical texts and Qur'anic passages

(western India), or derive from Jain temples of similar date, whereas others seem to date from more recent structures of the eleventh or twelfth centuries.

An account of the conquest of Delhi in Hasan Nizami's *Tāj al-Ma'āthir*, a chronicle written just a decade or two after the Qutb Mosque's construction, describes how the city's main temple was demolished by elephants, its stone images (*butān-i sangīn*) destroyed, and its materials recycled in the Qutb mosque:



Fig. 6.2 The
Qutb Minar



Fig. 6.3 Qutb Mosque, reused columns in the northern courtyard arcade

On its battlements were placed the golden domes of the idol temples (*qubbahā-yi zarīn-i but-khānahā*), looking like the glass parasol of the sun or the crown of Venus, set with pearls. By the blessings of the royal judgement, that delightful and sacred spot became the abode of men of purity, a place where prayers were granted.⁴

Later graffiti in the Qutb Complex, and continuities in the way in which pre-conquest materials were redeployed in its construction, indicate that Hindu masons were largely responsible for the recycling of appropriated materials. The recycling of architectural materials even when such masons were available thus seems to represent a conscious choice. The failure to “retrofit” existing temples (to use Hans Buchwald’s term) may reflect the fact that, unlike mosques, temples were not designed for mass communal worship.⁵ Speed may also have been a factor, but the same pattern was repeated later when the sultans of Delhi expanded their reach into western and southern India in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This apparent preference for *spolia* in mosques built in newly conquered frontier territories has led to suggestions that they constituted a distinct “conquest mosque” type, characterized by specific formal features and by the reuse of materials garnered from temples destroyed after the expansion

4 Adapted from Saroop, *Crown of Glorious Deeds*, pp. 141–2, using Hasan Nizami, *Tāj al-Ma’āthir*, fols 114a–b.

5 Buchwald, “Retrofit”.

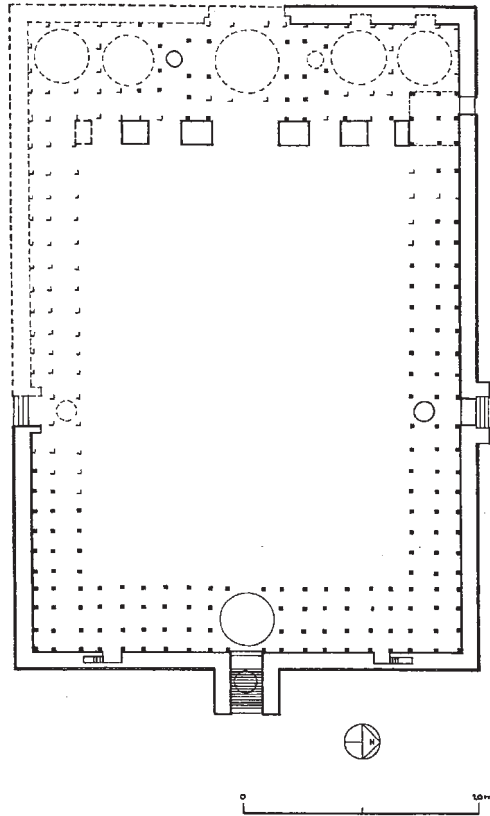


Fig. 6.4 Schematic ground-plan of the Qutb Mosque in 1192

of Indo-Islamic polities.⁶ Many of these were tutelary temples, temples that housed deities that presided over specific polities, their destruction constituting and heralding the end of the dynastic lines associated with them.⁷

The replacement of tutelary temples with congregational mosques constituted a rewriting of urban space that was both pragmatic (providing the Muslim community with a space to fulfill the requirements of ritual prayer) and ideological (signifying the supersession of the old political order and the permanence of the new). As in earlier contexts in which Muslims exercised political hegemony as a statistical minority, patronage of large-scale urban mosques formed part of what Oleg Grabar famously dubbed a “symbolic appropriation” of the land.⁸

6 Wagoner and Rice, “From Delhi to the Deccan”, pp. 89–90.

7 Eaton, “Temple Desecration”, pp. 259–60.

8 Grabar, *Formation*, pp. 43–72.

The appropriation of the site and materials for the Qutb Mosque is in fact announced to those entering it in one of two Persian foundation texts inscribed on the main (eastern) entrance (Fig. 6.1). The inscription on the inner lintel appears to be the earliest of the historical texts inscribed in the mosque:

This fort was conquered and this congregational mosque built in the months of the year 587 [1191–92] by the amir, the great general, commander of the army, Pole of the World and Religion, the *amir al-umarā* Aibek *shultānī* (that is, slave of the sultan) may God strengthen his helpers. [The materials of] twenty-seven idol temples (*but-khāna*), on each idol temple two million *diliwāls* had been spent, were used in this mosque. May God the Great and Glorious have mercy on that slave who prays for the faith of the good builder.⁹

The commemoration of reuse is unusual in a foundation text of this period even if the practice was common. The most obvious comparison is with the earliest days of Islamic expansion; for example, the (now lost) foundation text of the Great Mosque of Damascus (705–15) recorded the expropriation of the city's former Christian cathedral for the site of the mosque.

The apparent coincidence between material appropriation and its textual representation has led most modern scholars to take the foundation text of the Delhi mosque as a transparent statement of historical fact. There are, however, reasons to doubt this, as we shall see shortly. For the moment, I would like to draw attention to the manner in which the apparently factual information contained in the inscription is conveyed, and the rhetorical frames that it employs. The first point concerns the deployment of statistics. Most commentators have taken the figure of 27 temples mentioned in the inscription quite literally, sometimes attempting to confirm its veracity by correlating the number of reused pillars in the mosque to the number used in a "typical" Hindu temple. The figure coincides, however, with the traditional number of *nakshatras* or lunar mansions in Indic cosmology, suggesting that it was chosen for its connotative potential rather than its denotative value.¹⁰ The manner in which the cost of materials is coded – in the local currency of *diliwāls* rather than the dirhams used in Afghanistan and the central Islamic lands – represents another point of continuity with indigenous cultural norms. In addition, the citation of a figure for the value of the constituent materials (re)used in the mosque is highly unusual among Islamic foundation texts. It conforms, however, to the way in which certain kinds of religious patronage were memorialized in pre-conquest Sanskrit texts. This tension between the semantic content of the inscription (with its emphasis on discontinuity), and the protocols that it employs (which represent points of continuity with pre-conquest royal patronage), will be considered further below.

9 Horovitz, "Inscriptions", p. 13; Page, *Historical Memoir*, p. 29. For the grammatical peculiarities in this text see Patel, "Islamic Architecture", pp. 109–14.

10 Meister, "Mystifying Monuments", p. 25.

The second factor worth emphasizing is the suggestive content of the Qur'anic quotation that accompanies the historical text at the eastern entrance:

From those who deny and die disbelieving will never be accepted an earthful of gold if proffered by them as ransom. For them is grievous punishment, and none will help them. You will never come to piety unless you spend of things you love; and whatever you spend is known to God (Qur'an 3: 91–9).¹¹

If the figures cited in the accompanying historical text should be understood metaphorically, so too the gold referred to here can be understood as a metaphor for materials that should be valued not in themselves, but for their ability to advance the welfare of the community using the mosque. The juxtaposition of historical and religious texts locates the reuse of architectural materials within an "economy of piety", according to which the hoarding and accumulation of gold (activities particularly associated with India in Arabic and Persian writings) were proscribed in favor of its circulation for the benefit of the *umma*, the Muslim community.¹² Just as the material resources encapsulated in looted Buddhist or Hindu metal icons could be freed for circulation in the service of Islam (often by funding the construction of mosques), so too the constituent materials of demolished temples or derelict structures could be recycled to the same end. This rationale for reuse finds parallels in other religious traditions, notably Christian exegesis on passages in *Exodus* 12:35 that refer to the appropriation of Egyptian gold and silver by the fleeing Israelites. Late antique and medieval exegetes emphasized that the appropriation of these metals was divinely sanctioned, since they were subject to improper usage in pagan hands, extending the paradigm to justify the selective appropriation of pagan artifacts, learning, and style by Christian craftsmen. Christian theologians in medieval Spain used the same passages to justify both the physical appropriation of objects from the Muslims and the process of translating Arabic works, a type of sanctified looting that enriched the receiving community with the "ill-used" spoils of Arabic learning.¹³

The texts carved above the main entrance to the Qutb Mosque may provide insights into the connotations of appropriation and recycling in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, but with the single exception of the *Tāj al-Ma'āthir*, a chronicle of conquest, their emphasis on reuse is unique. We are fortunate in having several thirteenth- and fourteenth-century references to the mosque, ranging from passing mentions to extensive descriptions. These ignore the reuse of architectural materials in its construction, identifying

11 Welch et al., "Epigraphs, Scripture", p. 18.

12 For the economy of piety, see Flood, *Objects of Translation*, Chapter 2.

13 Cutler, "Reuse or use?", p. 1059; Pym, "Twelfth-century Toledo", pp. 59–60, 62.

instead the Arabic inscriptions that proliferate throughout the monument as its most culturally significant feature.¹⁴

This situation changed dramatically in the early nineteenth century, when colonial scholars began studying and writing about the Qutb Mosque.¹⁵ Informed by essentialist notions of Islam in general, and contrasting the despotism of “Muslim” rule in India with the benign hegemony of a burgeoning colonial state in particular, colonial writers focused on the extensive reuse of architectural materials to the exclusion of the formal qualities of the mosque in which they were redeployed.¹⁶ The context for the spoliation to which reuse apparently bore witness was provided by premodern textual narratives of conquest (including the *Tāj al-Ma’āthir*), with their tales of iconoclasm and temple desecration. Until recently, even the popular name of the Qutb Mosque, the *Quwwat al-Islām* (Might of Islam) was consistently cited as proving the intentions of its builders, although the name was first recorded in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century; premodern texts simply refer to the mosque as the Friday Mosque of Delhi.¹⁷

Reduced as they were to despoiling and recycling superior “Hindu” carvings in a rhetorical evocation of sectarian victory, Muslim patrons were presented as lacking a flair for artistic creativity or originality. Failing to consider reuse as a positive mode of reception, nineteenth- and twentieth-century observers who lauded the quality of the carvings from which the Qutb Mosque was constructed generally denied the same appreciation to their Muslim patrons. This perception was facilitated by a consistent emphasis on the *fact* rather than the *mode* of reuse. However, as Igor Kopytoff and many others have emphasized,¹⁸ the manner in which artifacts are redeployed illuminates the meanings and values ascribed to them by secondary and tertiary consumers. In the absence of contemporary texts offering a comprehensive rationale for strategies of reuse, the reused materials themselves constitute an archive capable of providing insights into both. The physical manipulation of the carved stones comprising the mosque provides significant insights into the “social life” of its constituent materials, permitting questions of agency, performance, and process to be addressed rather than sidelined or occluded from analysis. The point is made by the treatment of figural imagery on the carved stones reused in the mosque, which is usually cited as evidence for the undifferentiated iconoclasm of its patrons. Figural ornament was generally avoided in mosques, so the myriad of celestial nymphs, dwarfs, lion-faces,

14 Flood, *Objects of Translation*, pp. 242–3.

15 The earliest extended modern account of the mosque appeared in 1835: Ewer, “An Account of the Inscriptions”.

16 Flood, “Lost in Translation”.

17 Kumar, “Qutb and Modern Memory”. David Lelyveld has apparently discovered a reference to the Qutb Complex as the *Quwwat al-Islām* in a late eighteenth-century Urdu text.

18 Kopytoff, “Cultural Biography of Things”.

and sea monsters that proliferated on the reused materials from which the Qutb Mosque was constructed presented a problem. It has usually been assumed this was addressed by systematically defacing all figural imagery, or that the reused materials were plastered in order to obscure the offending images. However, neither view is correct. In the first place, alterations to images presuppose that they were visible and not obscured beneath a coat of plaster, an impression confirmed by the orchestration of polychromatic effects by alternating differently colored stones.¹⁹ Paradoxically, the idea that reused materials were originally plastered or whitewashed to produce a coherent whole is at odds with the emphasis on fragmentation in modern analyses. In the second place, while it is true that many of the images on the piers and pilasters of the mosque have been defaced, these alterations are not uniform; not all reused materials had the same semiotic value. At one end of a spectrum are the anthropomorphic images that were systematically altered. At the other are the antique images of lions (the royal beast of both Indic and Persian iconography) that were left intact, selected to embellish the threshold of the exterior entrance to a royal box (*mulūk khāna*) located in the northern end of the prayer hall.²⁰

The dialectic between past and present to which the figural carvings bear witness is no less relevant to the protocols governing the redeployment of the carved stones on which they appeared. Although some of the material used to construct the mosque may have been appropriated from temples targeted as symbols of the *ancien régime*, the compositional strategies governing its redeployment were firmly rooted in the idiom and syntax of pre-conquest architecture, suggesting continuity in the work of north Indian masons' guilds.²¹ In other words, the dialectical engagements to which the Qutb Mosque bears witness are characterized not only by an appropriation of the past through its material traces, but also by an engagement with the present through its living traditions.

The same is true of the inscription above the main entrance of the mosque; despite its emphasis on the mining of pre-conquest temples for structural materials, there is a tension between the content of the inscription, with its record of disjunction and rupture, and the conventions that it uses, which represent a point of continuity with pre-conquest practices. The dialectic between continuity and rupture, past and present, manifest in both the mosque and its foundation text is at odds with the emphasis on singular identities and synchronic meanings in published discussions of the multiple appropriations to which it bears witness.

19 Flood, "Refiguring Iconoclasm".

20 Flood, "Lost in Translation".

21 Flood, *Objects of Translation*, pp. 160–84.

More productive approaches to these dialectical qualities might be sought outside the fields of Islamic architecture or South Asian history. Analyses of post-revolutionary appropriations in early modern Europe offer particularly rich models. In her work on Revolutionary France, for example, Françoise Choay suggests that

To break with the past means neither to abolish its memory nor to destroy its monuments, but to conserve both in a dialectical movement that simultaneously assumes and transcends their original historical signification, by integrating it into a new semantic stratum.²²

Choay's comments resonate with Dale Kinney's observations on the historical diplopia (double-vision) associated with the deployment of *spolia*, a phenomenon closely related to the construction of memory, as we will see below.²³

The revaluation through appropriation intrinsic to the construction of "a new semantic stratum" has much in common with Roland Barthes' notion of myth, a second order of signification marked by the appropriation of an existing sign (a compound of signifier and signified) and its transformation into a new signified, a partial component of a second sign generated from it. Robert Nelson has demonstrated the utility of Barthes' analysis for articulating processes of resignification that accompany practices of artistic appropriation.²⁴ That Barthes' theory lends itself to such usage is hardly surprising, given its close relationship to the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss' discussion of mythical thought, in which he employs the metaphor of *bricolage*. This is a practice that refashions a heterogeneous assemblage of cultural materials derived from the accumulated remains of previous constructions and destructions in a manner congruent with both current needs and established practice.²⁵ In semiotic terms, *bricolage* constitutes an appropriation in which materials that once functioned as ends come to function as means. In Hal Foster's formulation, *bricolage* is distinguished from myth ("a one-way appropriation") by its dynamic character as "a process of textual play, of loss and gain".²⁶ The image of collage (and the work of Kurt Schwitters in particular) is often invoked in descriptions of premodern

22 Choay, *Invention of the Historic Monument*, p. 75. In a similar vein, see Wrigley, "Breaking the Code", p. 185; Clay, "Bouchardon's Statue".

23 Kinney, "Rape or Restitution", p. 57. See also Gross, *The Past in Ruins*, p. 5; Marinescu, "Transformations", p. 286.

24 Nelson, "Appropriation", pp. 162–4.

25 Lévi-Strauss, *Savage Mind*, pp. 17–22; Ashley and Plesch, "Cultural Processes of 'Appropriation'", pp. 4–7.

26 Foster, "'Primitive' Unconscious", pp. 63–4. It is worth drawing attention to Annie Coombes' differentiation of modernist collage from postmodernist *bricolage*, a distinction that she sees as inhering in the ability of the former to articulate a dialectical tension reproduced in the latter as a free-flowing confusion and flux that obscure the fractures and disjunctions essential to collage: Coombes, "Object of Translation".

monuments that make extensive reuse of architectural materials, but, with its relationship to dynamic processes of sign-formation, *bricolage* is perhaps a richer point of reference.

The appropriations and improvisations intrinsic to *bricolage*, and their ability to generate new meanings from pre-existing materials (and artistic vocabularies), exemplify the unstable and fluid nature of any sign, material or textual. In the Qutb Mosque, this semiotic mutability undermines the notion of singular, static identities intrinsic to the privileging of valorized "originals". In the case of the Delhi mosque, this "original" is dual: the ideal Persian mosque form and the material temple whose spoliation facilitates its deficient realization with alien materials and methods, the deformation of one mirroring the destruction of the other. In this sense, the *translatio* intrinsic to both *bricolage* and myth is closely related to processes of translation, highlighting the relationship between conceptual and physical displacement to which Choay's observation also draws attention.

The model of translation implied here is not, however, the traditional one of mimesis, replication and reproduction, which presupposes the generation of secondary works from a privileged original that can be carried between (architectural, verbal, or visual) languages. Rather, whether imagined as *bricolage* or myth, the phenomenon of appropriation necessitates a more fluid concept of translation, one closer to post-structuralist concepts of translation as transformation. These reject the notion of a stable "original", acknowledging instead that the semiotic value (and hence the meaning) of any term is always already heterogeneous and in process; as a consequence, there is no stable "original" to privilege over "secondary" translations. Like *bricolage* in Foster's characterization, the economy of translation is characterized by both loss and gain, the excess of translation promoting creative transformations that expand the meaning or semantic range of appropriated terms. Both modes of conceptualizing appropriation have the advantage of shifting the emphasis from the priority of primary contexts or self-subsisting forms to the more contingent and open-ended realm of practice. In the case of the Delhi mosque, the appropriation of land and materials in 1192 marked the beginning, not the end, of a diachronic process of appropriation. Ultimately, the mosque itself was susceptible to a variety of successive appropriations, the first of which explains the peculiarities of its foundation text.

Appropriation and Reinscription

In a discussion of Robert Rauschenberg's *Erased de Kooning Drawing* of 1953 (frontispiece), an iconoclastic icon of American modernism, Benjamin Buchloh has outlined the procedures of appropriation essential to the creation of the palimpsest image. *Erased de Kooning Drawing* is the product of a careful (but

incomplete) erasure of a pencil drawing supplied to Rauschenberg by his contemporary, Willem de Kooning, framed and provided with a title engraved on a metal label that evokes its production by the appropriation (or mythification) of de Kooning's work. In his discussion of *Erased de Kooning Drawing*, Buchloh relates its dialectical qualities to practices of depletion (of the original image), the doubling of a visual text by a second superimposed upon it (the label), and the tension that both generate between the "appropriated historical construct" on the one hand, and the "devices of framing and presentation" on the other.²⁷ Many of these qualities are common to the premodern appropriations discussed above, but I would like to draw particular attention to the identifying text and its role in creating the frame, which locates the work and informs its reception.

At first glance, the foundation text above the eastern entrance to the Qutb Mosque (Fig. 6.1) appears to fulfill a similar function, constituting the mosque as a *lieu de mémoire* inscribed with the conditions of its own production. On closer examination, however, the inscription is marked by several idiosyncrasies that complicate the question of its historicity. These include the date given for the capture of Delhi, which is at odds with that of 588/1192 given by most contemporary chronicles. In addition, it is inscribed in Persian rather than the more usual Arabic; Persian foundation texts only became common in India a few decades later, during the reign of the Delhi sultan Shams al-Din Iltutmish (r. 1210–36). In addition to chronological and linguistic anomalies, the form of the inscription suggests that it should be dated several decades later than 587/1191–92, the date it cites.²⁸

The emphasis on Qutb al-Din Aybek, the mamluk (military slave) of the Ghurid sultan, rather than the sultan himself (who is named in an Arabic text set above the northern entrance to the mosque dated 592/1195), further suggests a relationship to Iltutmish, who had served under Aybek. After the death in 1206 of the Ghurid sultan under whose auspices (or at least in whose name) the Qutb Mosque had been built, the Ghurid sultanate disintegrated.²⁹ In India, Qutb al-Din Aybek assumed pre-eminence among the royal mamluks who had effected the conquest of north India. The death of Qutb al-Din Aybek in 1210 initiated a period of internecine strife. In the unsettled conditions that followed, several rival mamluks vied for supremacy, quickly pushing aside the claims of Qutb al-Din's son. Over the next two decades, one contender emerged victorious from these internecine struggles for power,

27 Buchloh, "Allegorical Procedures", p. 45.

28 Horovitz, "Inscriptions", p. 14. Although it has been suggested that the text is a "maladroit Persian translation" of an Arabic original, with an original date of 589 misread as 587 (the confusion between 7 and 9 being common in Arabic in the absence of diacritical marks), why it might have been felt necessary to replace the original text is unclear: Pinder-Wilson, *Studies*, p. 102n.

29 For the historical background, see Jackson, *Delhi Sultanate*, pp. 28–35; Kumar, *Emergence*, pp. 116–24, 132–43.

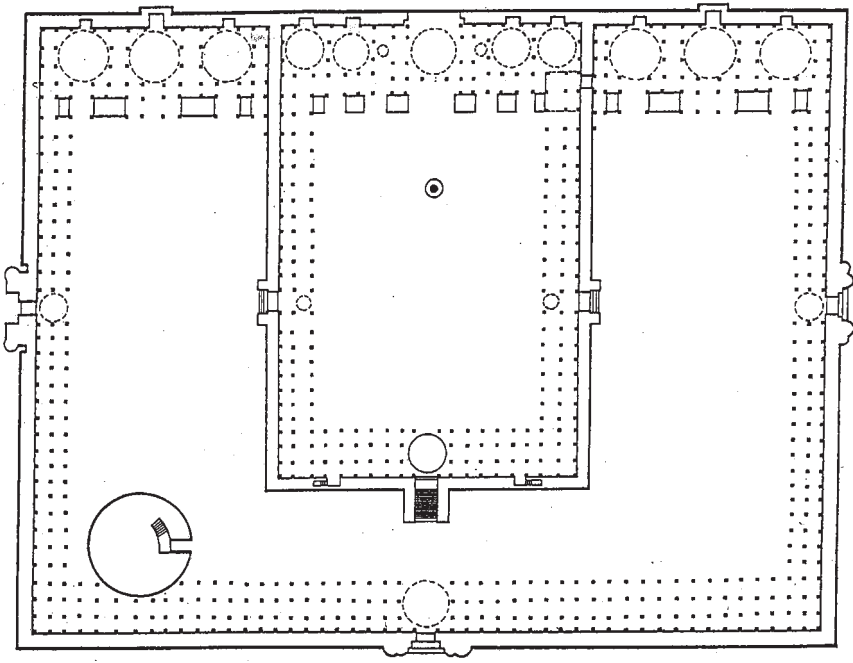


Fig. 6.5 Schematic ground-plan of the larger complex constructed in the 1220s, now largely ruined

eliminating his opponents through a combination of political guile and military prowess: Shams al-Din Iltutmish. With the demise of rival centers and claimants to authority, Iltutmish established himself as the paramount ruler of a new Indian sultanate based in Delhi. In effect, Delhi became an imperial capital in the first decades of the thirteenth century as the result of a spat between rival war-lords.

As the Friday Mosque of the newly emergent imperial center, the historical associations of the Qutb Mosque rendered it a valuable rhetorical tool for a parvenu sultan. A massive building campaign undertaken by Iltutmish in the 1220s enshrined the mosque of 1192 within a monumental architectural frame that almost tripled its original area (Fig. 6.5). The most famous feature of the original mosque, the Qutb Minar, had originally stood outside its southwestern corner, but was now heightened by an additional three stories (perhaps according to the original plan) and enclosed within one of the courtyards of the newly extended monument. In this way, the original mosque and its minaret were both figuratively and literally integrated into "a new semantic stratum".

The precedent set by Iltutmish in both appropriating and superseding the ultimate sign of his master's authority was followed by subsequent claimants to the title of sultan. A century later, for example, history repeated itself when

the Delhi sultan ‘Ala’ al-Din Khalji (r. 1296–1316) sought to up the ante of this competitive discourse, developing a megalomaniac vision for the complex that would have tripled the area of the Iltutmish mosque. In ‘Ala’ al-Din’s plan – marked by a gigantism that defied realization – the composite mosque built by Aybek and Iltutmish would itself have been incorporated into a more monumental structure, and provided with a minaret that would dwarf the most famous feature of the complex, the Qutb Minar.

The inscription of the Qutb Mosque within a monumental carapace in the 1220s provides a context for the anachronistic textual frame that introduces the mosque at its eastern entrance. The cumulative evidence suggests that this “original” foundation text was in fact set in place during the reign of Iltutmish. Its general emphasis on the extirpation of idolatry found an echo in the Qur’anic passages inscribed on those sections of the Qutb Minar added by Iltutmish. The appropriation of the material resources of idolatry commemorated in the inscription found a practical counterpart in the appropriation of resonant Hindu icons and their installation in the Delhi mosque during the 1220s. The looted stone and brass sculptures are lost today, but a remarkable artifact survives to suggest more complex engagements with more distant Indian pasts. This is a seven-meter high antique iron pillar that stands in the courtyard of Qutb al-Din’s mosque, the physical heart of the massive complex that Iltutmish endowed as the symbolic omphalos (*qutb*) of his capital, directly on axis with its main mihrab (Figs. 6.6, 10.3).³⁰ That the pillar has been reused from an earlier context is clear, for a dedicatory text inscribed upon it tells us that it was originally dedicated as a standard (*dhvaja*) to a Vishnu temple by a fourth- or fifth-century Indian ruler of the Gupta dynasty, whose military prowess the inscription celebrates. The pillar belongs to a genre of commemorative columns erected by Indian rulers, known as pillars of fame (*kirtistambhas*) or pillars of victory (*jayastambhas*).

The mid-fourteenth-century historian Shams-i Siraj ‘Afif informs us that Iltutmish re-erected the pillar in order to perpetuate the memory of his rule, probably in the late 1220s or early 1230s, when other signs of authority were being accumulated within the mosque. The endeavor (or at least ‘Afif’s representation of it) highlights a relationship between appropriation and the construction of historical memory, a theme to which I will return. The appropriation and re-erection of the pillar are usually seen as reflecting its trophy value and consequent ability to memorialize the triumph of the “Muslim” present over the “Hindu” past, but (unlike the looted Hindu icons) there is nothing to suggest that it was seized during one of Iltutmish’s military campaigns. More tellingly, the closest precedents for Iltutmish’s appropriation

30 For a full discussion of the pillar and its relationship to the architectural patronage of Iltutmish, see Flood, “Pillars, Palimpsests and Princely Practices” and *Objects of Translation*, Chapter 6.



Fig. 6.6 The monumental screen added to the prayer hall in 1198, with the Iron Pillar standing on axis

and re-erection of the antique pillar are in fact found in the ritual practices of pre-conquest Indian kings, who routinely appropriated, recontextualized, and reinscribed antique pillars. The potential for legitimation resided therefore not just in the pillar itself, but also in the very act of appropriation, which contributed to the construction of fictive continuities. The valences of the iron medium may have further enhanced the column's mytho-historical associations and consequent narrative potential, for in Arabic and Persian tradition a close relationship existed between marvelous iron structures and Alexander the Great, to whose legacy Iltutmish laid titular claim as the "Second Alexander" (*Sikandar al-thānī*).

The cultural connotations of the iron pillar and its potential to evoke literary and oral accounts of ancient epic deeds remind us that when it came to architectural space, material manipulation was but one mode of appropriation. The physical rewriting of sacred space during the 1220s found a contemporary literary counterpart in a paean to Iltutmish included in the *Jawāmi' al-ḥikāyāt* (*Collections of Stories*) of Sadid al-Din Muhammad 'Awfi (c. 625/1228), who includes the Delhi mosque in a section on remarkable monuments, including the pyramids of Egypt. In his description, 'Awfi refers to the stone arches and marble paving of the mosque and the beauty of its *riwāqs* (arcades). Particular praise is reserved for the adjoining minaret, the Qutb Minar (Fig. 6.2). In 'Awfi's description, the minaret is compared to a living creature standing near the presence of the sultan (whose palace was evidently located nearby) and rewarded by him for its service with a rich belt or girdle (*band*), a reference

to its richly carved ornament.³¹ The spectacular appearance of the structure is represented as the result of royal beneficence, while the image of the belt (a common element of royal gifts) binds the minaret to the sultan as one who is his vassal and hence does his will. Similarly, the call to prayer (*adhān*) given from the minaret is compared to the orchestra (*naubat*) that sounded the hours of prayer at the gate of the sultan's palace.

'Awfi's appropriation of the Qutb complex for the glorification of the sultan provides a literary equivalent to Iltutmish's physical manipulation of architectural space to the same end, inscribing it within a narrative of beneficence, dependence, and submission. The coincidence between material and textual enframing not only extended to the "original" foundation text set at the entrance to the mosque, but to the other signs of imperium, renunciation, and victory set within it. In its role as a palimpsest agglomeration of appropriated signs that advertised and aggrandized the authority of both sultan and sultanate, the Delhi mosque provides a precocious example of what Michel Foucault termed a "heterotopia", a space in which a variety of sites, including those that are incompatible or incommensurate, "are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted".³² As a heterotopia, the Delhi mosque of the early thirteenth century functioned as a *lieu de mémoire* in which the transition from one political order to the next was indexed in a manner that stressed continuity. To this end, Iltutmish's patronage engaged both the immediate Islamic past materialized in the mosque itself (thus obscuring the way in which the sultan had seized power) and the distant Indic past manifest in ancient brass images and antique iron pillars.

Conclusion

The religious pre-eminence of the Qutb Mosque endured until the first decades of the fourteenth century, after which a series of new imperial capitals was built in close proximity to the old center of Delhi, each provided with its own Friday Mosque. Even then, its aura was sufficiently potent to inspire attempts at appropriation, either through interventions on its material fabric (rebuilding or restoration, for example), or by replicating its characteristic features in new monuments.³³ After the end of the fourteenth century, we hear little about

31 'Awfi, *Jawāmi' al-hikāyāt*, fol. 74b. An English summary of the text is given by Prakash, "Qutb Minar", pp. 55–6.

32 Foucault, "Of Other Spaces".

33 Koch, "Copies of the Qutb". The phenomenon finds an interesting contemporary counterpart in the eastern Mediterranean, where, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Mamluk sultans of Egypt undertook several campaigns of restoration to the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem and the Great Mosque of Damascus, or sought to replicate their characteristic features in their own monuments: Flood, "Umayyad Survivals".

the mosque until the early decades of the nineteenth century, when its ruins became an object of scholarship. Through the course of the nineteenth century, developing technologies of representation and reproduction enabled new transregional patterns of appropriation and consumption. In addition to the production and circulation of descriptions, engravings, and photographic images of the Qutb Mosque and other Indian monuments, in 1870 the reused pillars of the mosque were themselves cast in plaster and shipped to London for display (along with photographs of the casting operation) as part of the representation of the subcontinent in the architectural courts of the South Kensington Museum. Appropriately, in light of the emphasis on the appropriation and reuse of carved "Hindu" stones in contemporary scholarly literature, colonial endeavors to bring the mosque "back home" to a metropolitan audience were premised on the representational power of the fragment.³⁴

Indian objects displayed to nineteenth-century British audiences required textual and verbal explication to identify, order, and give them meaning.³⁵ Neither the fragments nor the monuments from which they derived and into which they were incorporated spoke for themselves, but required narrative re-presentation. Inscribed within a Manichean vision of South Asian history, the reused fragments from which the Qutb Mosque had been constructed materialized narratives of conquest, decline, and violence, within which tropes of appropriation and spoliation proliferated. These narratives were instrumental to colonial-era contrasts between "Muslim" and British rule and, more recently, to their Hindu Nationalist successors, for whom the advent of Islam ended a Hindu Golden Age. In both colonial and nationalist narratives, the materialization of these histories in monumental form opened the possibility of renegotiating the past by re-appropriating sites or materials purloined by Muslim invaders.³⁶ A plaque attached to the eleventh-century Sas Bahu temple in Gwalior is inscribed in English:

This temple was cleaned and stripped of the Chuna [whitewash] with which the Mahomedans had defaced it for centuries by Major J.B. Keith November A.D. 1881 under the direction of Captain H. Cole R.E. Curator of Ancient Monuments in India.³⁷

The gesture of inscription literalizes a trope found in the work of contemporary architectural historians, which figured medieval monuments as lithic books from which the (primarily sectarian) history of India could be read.³⁸ In its

34 Pellizzari, "From Stone to Paper", pp. 35–7; Hoffenberg, *Empire on Display*, p. 153.

35 Breckenridge, "Aesthetics and Politics", p. 205.

36 The manipulation of "Hindu" fragments, their removal from mosques and restoration to "original" contexts or functions has sometimes been central to these endeavors: Flood, "Lost in Translation".

37 Recorded during a visit to the temple in December 1999.

38 Flood, "Signs of Violence", p. 26.

attempt to shape the reception of the monument, to inscribe it within sectarian histories of appropriation, the text bears comparison to the foundation text set at the entrance to the Qutb Mosque in Delhi in the 1220s. In the former case, however, the emphasis is not on rupture but on restoration, a reflection of the synchronic fixation of modern scholarship criticized at the outset: the ascription of singular, static, originary identities to material artifacts and forms.

Alongside the perpetuation of colonial-era paradigms, however, over the past decades there has been a gradual shift in scholarship on the appropriation and recycling of architectural materials in north India away from the bare fact of spoliation and fragmentation (and its denunciation) to an interest in practices and protocols of appropriation and their broader cultural implications. This shift reflects (and has been heavily dependent on) developments in the study of late antique and early medieval architecture in Europe, particularly Dale Kinney's pioneering work on *spolia*. The burgeoning of what might broadly be termed "*spolia studies*" (a phenomenon to which this volume contributes), is an exciting development that promises to broaden our understanding of premodern appropriation. As I have tried to demonstrate above, premodernists are well positioned to avail themselves of a wide array of methodological and theoretical tools developed in the fields of anthropology, art history, and literary and cultural studies whose appropriation for the analysis of premodernity promises at the very least to help refine the questions that we ask of our material and the manner in which they are posed.

However, the very availability of these tools underlines the contemporaneity of this interest in questions of appropriation, recycling, and reuse across a range of fields, a development that reflects the rise (and after-effects) of post-structuralism and postmodernism within and without the academy. The pre-eminence of strategies of accumulation, appropriation, *bricolage*, hybridization, and pastiche in contemporary artistic production similarly reflects the meta-quality of what Charles Jencks has dubbed "the age of quotation marks".³⁹ In a recent study of classical *spolia* in the early Christian churches of Rome, Maria Fabricius Hansen suggests that

The dramatically increasing interest in *spolia* through the last decades of the twentieth century seems to be closely related to contemporary historicistic [sic], eclectic and unclassical tendencies. What has been designated the postmodern and deconstructionist era has witnessed a new appreciation of the heterogeneous, oblique qualities of early Christian architecture so clearly reflecting the juxtaposition of historical phases. There seems to be some kind of correspondence between the early medieval period and present times in their

39 Bhabha, "Postmodernism/Postcolonialism", pp. 437–8, 445.

cultivation of history and tradition. History is paradoxically both drained of and invested with new meaning.⁴⁰

The suggestion is pregnant with two further, perhaps contradictory, implications. The first is the possibility that premodern aesthetic sensibilities may have prefigured those of postmodernity in some sense. Not directly relevant to my subject here, the topic is an interesting if controversial one, which I hope to explore elsewhere. The second implication, unsettling for those invested in privileging emic categories of explanation (those that would have been recognized by the actors in a given situation) over etic (those drawn from external frameworks of analysis and understanding), is that our own interest in and understanding of appropriation, fragmentation, and spoliation may be quite different from those of the builders, patrons, and users of the monuments that we study. At the least, this realization would indicate our inability to escape anachronism. At its worst, it would see our own interest in fragments and reuse as producing the objects of our study.

As previously noted, one of the most persistent features of nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship on the Qutb Mosque has been a tendency to fragment the whole, to emphasize reused architectural elements at the expense of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* of which they formed part and to whose creation they contributed. By contrast, the recycling of architectural materials failed to attract the attention of the premodern literati who visited the mosque and consigned their impressions to paper. This discrepancy might be read in the light of Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's assertion that "fragments are not simply a necessity of which we make a virtue, a vicissitude of history ... We make fragments."⁴¹ A broader context for this observation can be sought in Bruno Latour's provocative contrast between a premodernity marked by practices of translation and hybridization, and a modernity characterized (at least in theory) by strategies of disaggregation or purification that correspond to what he calls "the modern critical stance".⁴²

Even where appropriation is a relevant category of analysis, it is never sufficient. Analysis organized around the theme of appropriation not only runs the risk of disaggregating complex wholes, but also risks dehistoricizing and homogenizing what are in effect complex congeries of heterogeneous cultural practices. With its implications of reflexivity or self-consciousness in the act or its representation, "appropriation" is perhaps relevant to the initial seizure of the materials to build the Qutb Mosque in the 1190s and the later commemoration of the act of foundation in the 1220s. However, Iltutmish's re-erection of the fourth-century iron pillar in the Qutb Mosque during

40 Fabricius Hansen, *Eloquence of Appropriation*, p. 38. In a similar, but contradictory, vein see Papalexandrou, "Memory Tattered and Torn", pp. 75–6.

41 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Objects of Ethnography", p. 388.

42 Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, pp. 3, 10–11, 121.

the same period and its antecedents in the practices of earlier Hindu kings remind us that we must consider not only practices of appropriation but also *appropriations of practice*. More crucial still is the need to distinguish between synchronic acts of appropriation and their textual representations, which can be integral to diachronic processes of appropriation. If appropriation, unlike influence, implies an active engagement with its objects and is (explicitly or not) a necessarily historicist gesture, the assertion of historicity sometimes obscures or occludes as much as it reveals. The text at the main entrance of the Delhi mosque commemorating the expropriation of temple materials constituted an appropriation, not of the temples of Delhi to which it refers, but of the mosque that had superseded them decades earlier. The dialectic between the connotative and denotative aspects of the inscription, its reiteration of the normative rhetoric of “Islamic” conquest according to pre-conquest “Hindu” conventions, reflected the architecture and contents of the mosque to which it was affixed. In the 1220s, the mosque became the repository of highly charged objects that invoked both the recent past of Islam in India and the more distant epic past of Indian kings. The invocation of multiple pasts was integral to an endeavor to construct collective memories around which a community divided by ethnicity, political affiliation, and sectarian affinities could adhere and cohere.

Although rooted in the specific historical conditions of early thirteenth-century north India, the (re)deployment of select fragments to construct new frameworks of meaning in which past and present are brought into constellation is hardly unique. In her study of the reuse of “pagan” sculptures in Middle Byzantine churches, for example, Amy Papalexandrou (drawing on Mary Carruthers’ work on premodern memory) relates their appropriation to the manipulation of social memory “by appropriating visually recognizable material remains and re-installing them in a new ‘web’ of associations”.⁴³

In his study of the relationship between history and memory, Pierre Nora suggests “memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present”, distinguished from history by its attachment to sites rather than events.⁴⁴ However, if memory is distinguished from history by its attachment to sites rather than events, Iltutmish’s appropriation of the Qutb Complex suggests that both could be rendered coincident by the judicious use of texts. In this sense, the figurative and literal reinscription of the Qutb Mosque in the 1220s bears comparison with other historical examples of *translatio memoriae*.⁴⁵ Informed by colonial concerns, essentialist notions of a monolithic Islam, and a tendency to privilege the analysis of texts over that of material

43 Papalexandrou, “Memory Tattered and Torn”, p. 69.

44 Nora, “Between Memory and History”, pp. 8–9. For a particularly contentious example of the relationship between monuments and memory in contemporary South Asia, see Guha-Thakurta, “Archaeology and the Monument”.

45 For examples, see Kinney, “*Spolia*”, pp. 134–5; Elsner, “Iconoclasm”, pp. 209–19.

culture, modern scholars took the text inscribed on the mosque decades after its construction as an original historical document. Perpetuating a carefully crafted version of history that emphasized the ideal of inter-sectarian conflict over the verities of intra-sectarian competition, these scholars fell into a trap set for them in the 1220s.⁴⁶

The anachronism that characterizes this pragmatic intersection between premodern dissimulation and modern essentialism illuminates a broader phenomenon of appropriation. In his classic essay on cultural memory and identity formation, Jan Assmann distinguishes between the diachronic potential of the texts, images, and sites that Pierre Nora sees as central to the formation of memory, and the synchronic realization of this potential in specific cultural-historical circumstances:

Cultural memory exists in two modes: first in the mode of potentiality of the archive whose accumulated texts, images, and rules of conduct act as a total horizon, and second in the mode of actuality, whereby each contemporary context puts the objectivized meaning into its own perspective, giving it its own relevance.⁴⁷

Whether characterized as interpretation, myth, or translation, the activation of the archive is always a form of appropriation, as much an activity of the present as a practice in the past that it endeavors to represent.

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46 See Jackson, *Delhi Sultanate*, p. 31; Kumar, *Emergence*, pp. 87–97, 105–25, 135.

47 Assmann, "Collective Memory", p. 130.

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Renaissance *Spolia* and Renaissance Antiquity (One Neighborhood, Three Cases)¹

Michael Koortbojian

At the close of the sixteenth century, the architect Carlo Maderno designed a new palace for Asdrubale Mattei, the Palazzo Mattei di Giove (1598–1617).² A magnificent building, the Palazzo Mattei's noble form epitomized the established, indeed conservative, character of late Renaissance classicism in Rome. Once completed, the palace's austere façade stood in contrast to an enclosed inner courtyard, whose multi-storied walls were adorned with Asdrubale's collection of antiquities, which are still *in situ*.³ Something of this patron's attitude towards his collection is preserved in this *cortile* (Fig. 7.1), where, in 1616, a large inscription was installed, claiming:

ASDRUBAL MATTHAEIUS MARCHIO JOVII VETERUM SIGNIS TANQUAM
SPOLIIS EX ANTIQUITATE OMNIUM VICTRICE DETRACTIS DOMUM
ORNAVIT AC PRISCAE VIRTUTIS INVITAMENTUM POSTERIS SUIS
RELIQUIT ANNO DOMINI MDCXVI.

(Asdrubale Mattei, *Marchese di Giove*, adorned his house with ancient sculptures, as if *spolia* taken from antiquity, that victor over all things, and he left these behind for his descendants as an inducement to ancient virtue. In the year of our Lord 1616.)⁴

1 Many thanks to the editors for inviting me to attend the colloquium at the Clark Art Institute and to contribute this essay to the publication, as well as for their most welcome criticisms, which have improved what follows. Thanks as well to Chris Celenza, Walter Stephens, and Herica Valladares for advice regarding some of the translations, and to John Blazejewski (Marquand Library, Princeton University) for photographs.

2 Hibbard, *Carlo Maderno*, pp. 43–7; Panofsky-Soergel, “Zur Geschichte des Palazzo Mattei di Giove”.

3 Antiquities collection: Guerrini (ed.), *Palazzo Mattei di Giove*.

4 Text from Panofsky-Soergel, “Zur Geschichte des Palazzo Mattei di Giove”, p. 152.



Fig. 7.1 Palazzo Mattei, courtyard façade

In the context of the present volume, the taste for antiquities declared by Asdrubale's inscription demands both explanation and contextualization. *Spolia* – materials, whether sculptural or architectural, stripped from their original setting and reused in new ones⁵ – were, for Renaissance men like Mattei, virtually synonymous with antiquity; thus one wants to know what these sculptures were that he could consider “as if *spolia* from antiquity”. For, as we shall see, there is good reason to believe that the inscription's wording was intentionally ambiguous. *Veterum signa* (literally, “statues of the ancients”) might signal not only that these *spolia* were actually ancient, but also that they might be regarded “as if” so (*tanquam spoliis*). And, not unrelated to this problem, it must be determined in what sense antiquity was “the victor over all things”, and might be regarded as “an inducement to ancient virtue”, if other sculptures (those *veterum signa*) might be so likened to antiquity's despoiled remains.

The following essay will attempt, first, to explicate Mattei's idiosyncratic conception of *spolia* and their relationship to new creations in their image, *in aemulatio antiquitatis*; secondly, to compare the case of the Palazzo Mattei with two other examples – prominent and accessible instances from Mattei's

5 Kinney, “The Concept of Spolia”, with bibliography.

Roman neighborhood, surely known to him – in which similar relationships to the past and its *spolia* are implicated, and in which new works stood alongside *spolia* and were created in emulation of them. Discussion of the issues presented by the Palazzo Mattei's courtyard inscription, as well as those raised by these other neighboring examples, will allow us to situate Mattei's claims in his own age and in the early modern tradition to which they are indebted. But these monuments will also permit us to ponder the varying ways in which *spolia*, among the pre-eminent signs of Renaissance Rome's classicizing culture, might be considered to be – or not to be – merely fragments wrenched from their ancient settings, *spolia ex antiquitate detracta*.

I

The taste for antiquities, and for classical remains in general, had changed during the course of the sixteenth century. The celebration of the past's fragmentary spoils, epitomized, for example, by the colossal heads and hands of Constantine that were enshrined on the Capitol since the late fifteenth century, had given way – in part due to the sense of artistic rivalry between moderns and ancients – to a desire to see these things whole once again.⁶ So, for example, Benvenuto Cellini would recall in his *Autobiography* a boast made to Duke Cosimo de' Medici, that he could restore his patron's newly acquired fragment of a marble youth not only by the attachment of head, arms, and feet, but that he would add "an eagle, so that it might be baptized as a Ganymede".⁷ Thus, by the early seventeenth century, like other collectors of his era, Asdrubale was not only inclined to restore his fragments so as to "improve" them, but even to augment them with modern productions in ancient style. This is why the *veterum signa* that the *cortile*'s inscription referred to were, in fact, not all old. While numerous documents survive attesting Mattei's purchase of ancient sculptures for his palace and its courtyard, there are others that clearly refer to modern "reproductions". Quintessentially ancient works such as double-headed herms were fabricated to extend the Mattei holdings ("*... per manifattura de doi testi congiunti insieme*"), and, in the tradition of Cellini, Asdrubale employed sculptors in the long-accepted practice of "marrying" old and new ("*una testa d'un settimio severo moderna posta da me ad un mio busto per mettere in capo le scale*"). And when he acquired a "Tiberius with a cuirass at his feet, more than 12 *palmi* high" that was in pieces, these were subsequently made whole by the sculptor Pompeo

6 This taste for antiquities made whole was, of course, not unprecedented, as noted by Esch, Chapter 1 above. Capitoline Constantines: Fittschen and Zanker, *Katalog der römischen Porträts*, Kat. Nos. 122–3; Ensoli, "I colossi di bronzo".

7 Cellini, *La Vita*, p. 413.

Ferrucci. The result still stands today in the *cortile*, its numerous integrations and its unrelated head – ancient, but not original – readily apparent.⁸

The distinction between old and new, between authentic *spolia* and their imitation, as well as their proclaimed purpose (“as an inducement to ancient virtue”), was facilitated by the context of their display. While little other evidence survives for Asdrubale’s attitude towards these ancient monuments,⁹ a fuller sense of how his antiquities might have lent themselves to such a claim for the benefit of their private contemplation and the pleasure and virtue it could bring is suggested by his brother’s testament of 1610. There, Ciriaco Mattei spoke of his grand garden villa, known as the Navicella, which abutted the Church of Santa Maria in Domnica on the Celian hill, whose displays of artwork provided a means for the efficacy of similar rumination:

Qual giardino per prima et da quaranta anni sonno era vigna, et io con molta spesa et sollecitudine et tempo l’ho ridotto in forma di giardino con haverci fatte molte et diverse statue pili tavole intarsiate, Vasi, Quadri di pitture et diversi marmi, et fattovi all’anni addietro condurre l’Aqua felice {et fattovi} varie et diverse fontane et redduttolo in quel buon stato nel quale al presente si trova ... qual giardino è stato anco di molta mia recreatione, et trattenimento, et di esercizio di virtuosi et di reputatione

(This garden, at its beginning, forty years ago, was a vineyard, and with great expense and care and time I transformed it into a garden, and have placed there many statues, sarcophagi, intarsia reliefs, vases, paintings, and diverse marbles, and in the years before the completion of the Acqua Felice [1586] made there various and diverse fountains, and brought it to that happy state in which one finds it at present ... this garden has also done much for my recreation and my entertainment, and for the enjoyment of *virtuosi* and men of reputation ...)¹⁰

The sense of a private retreat, in a garden setting surrounded by works of ancient art, was echoed in many other Roman aristocratic abodes of the Renaissance era, and Ciriaco Mattei’s recollection finds an analogue in his brother’s more urban residence. At the Palazzo Mattei, a profound emphasis on privacy was reflected in the interiority that characterized its owner’s presentation of his collection. The palace’s sole inscription, with its proud declaration of purpose,

8 Documents in Guerrini (ed.), *Palazzo Mattei di Giove*, pp. 60–61; “Tiberius”: *ibid.*, Cat. 14; Panofsky-Soergel, “Zur Geschichte des Palazzo Mattei di Giove”, p. 153.

9 Asdrubale’s aesthetic tastes were broad: together with his brother Ciriaco, he was an equally passionate collector of contemporary works of art: both brothers were patrons of Caravaggio, and Asdrubale’s palazzo featured frescos by Albani, Lanfranco, and Pietro da Cortona, among others (see Panofsky-Soergel, “Zur Geschichte des Palazzo Mattei di Giove”).

10 Lanciani, *Storia degli scavi*, 3, pp. 93–6 = Guerrini (ed.), *Palazzo Mattei di Giove*, pp. 57–9; excerpted in MacDougall, “A Circus, a Wild Man, and a Dragon”, p. 121. I have deleted the second instance of *fattovi* in the interest of sense, on the grounds of dittography. For the 1614 inventory of Ciriaco’s collection: Lanciani, *Storia degli scavi*, 3, pp. 97–104. The garden: MacDougall; Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening*, pp. 96–7; Benocci, “L’ideazione”.

was not on its façade, and the building's public classicism was here divorced from Asdrubale's antiquities collection, which was now a private affair. The two aspects, public and private, should be seen in counterpoint, as they are the palace's and its collection's twin forms of classicizing reference to the past, one (its actual *spolia*) authentic, the other (its classicizing façade and its newly minted *signa*) merely seeming so. It is these twin forms that the palace's courtyard inscription evokes in its seemingly deliberate antithesis, *veterum signa ... spolia antiquitatis*.¹¹

The lessons gleaned from the study of Rome's surviving architectural remains were diligently and sedately echoed in the palace's grand brickwork façades, set off by the stark order of its closely ranged windows and its two centralized entryways. If the subtle language of ancient Rome's most sober and regimented structures was re-employed on the façade, the interior spaces revealed a wholly different aesthetic, due, mostly, to the omnipresent *spolia*, authentic and otherwise, that were displayed throughout, as a form of ornament. These *spolia* formed part of an ensemble that required not only the restoration of fragments, but also the manufacture of wholly new "antiquities" for its full effect and significance. For the key structural principle of their display – the symmetrical placement of similar forms, thus presenting a balanced and ordered composition – is readily apparent. It is not simply that quantity was prized over quality: the display's subordination of individual elements as well as the integrity of their subject matter and original functions were consequences of a fundamentally decorative approach to their meaning in their new setting, in which a historical sense of *authenticity* gave way to contemporary concern with *affect*. At his palace, Mattei's antiquities, divorced from their original contexts, often fragmentary and subsequently "restored", were joined by newly fashioned works *all'antica*, and thus reconceived as the expression of a thoroughly modern sensibility, in which "art collecting" as a modern cultural phenomenon finds its precursor. Despite his avowal that antiquity was "the victor over all", a triumph signaled by the omnipresence of the classical past's remains in Renaissance Rome, one recognizes here just how *ahistorical* Mattei's sense of antiquity was: here taste – *gustus* not *antiquitas* – *vincit omnia*.

II

The distinction between the public and private faces of the Palazzo Mattei, between its emulation of a classical style on the exterior and its display of antiquities on its interior, divided the two fundamental aspects of Rome's continuity with her ancient past. For Rome's *spolia*, both architectural and

11 Following Brilliant, "I piedistalli del giardino di Boboli".



Fig. 7.2 House of Lorenzo Manlio, façade with inscription

sculptural, were everywhere, and often conjoined. Writing from Rome in 1411, the Byzantine scholar Manuel Chrysoloras described what was, to his mind, one of the city's wonders:

Walking through the streets one finds at every corner sculpted reliefs representing episodes from the ancient Greek myths ... these one can find on the sides of sarcophagi ... [which are] even cemented into the walls of private houses.¹²

A modest example of such an employment of *spolia* still stands at the heart of what has long been Rome's Jewish ghetto. There, in the late fifteenth century, on the north-east corner of the Piazza Giudea, Lorenzo Manlio, a successful apothecary, built himself a house. Embedded in its façade are fragments of various ancient sculptures: an inscribed relief depicting a wolf attacking a rabbit (?), a portion of a lion hunt sarcophagus, a multi-figured funerary relief, and a segment of an ancient battle sarcophagus, among others.¹³

¹² Greek text in Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators*, p. 150; trans. D. Thomason in Bober and Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture*, p. 47.

¹³ Manlio also owned statues: *Sunt praeterea in aedibus Laurentii Manlii ... non longe a platea iudeorum statuae insignes* (Albertini, *Opusculum*, fol. Q2v); the façade of the house was apparently painted, as well: Albertini, fol. Y4v: *Domus Laurentii manlii in platea iudeorum*

In this regard, Manlio's large yet unassuming house was hardly unusual; indeed, such a display of *spolia* was commonplace, as the passage from Chrysoloras demonstrates. Numerous other *spolia* are traced to this section of the city in medieval and Renaissance sources; many are architectural elements, such as columns or segments of entablatures, and are still to be seen embellishing the late fifteenth-century houses of this neighborhood. Quite probably they originally graced the structures surrounding the ancient Circus Flaminius, upon whose southern traces was erected the line of buildings facing the Piazza Giudea, the house built by Lorenzo Manlio chief among them.

These vestiges of Roman antiquity embedded in Manlio's façade were dwarfed, both physically and conceptually, by a monumental classicizing inscription that announced his claim to revive not only his vaunted ancient Roman pedigree but also the former glory of the city itself (Fig. 7.2). This mammoth travertine inscription, among the longest to be seen in Rome, extended across the building's façade, in three prominent lines, for over 21 meters:

URBE ROMA IN PRISTINAM FORMA<M R>ENASCENTE LAUR(ENTIUS)
MANLIUS KARITATE ERGA PATRI<AM GENT(IS) A>EDIS SUO

NOMINE MANLIAN(O) A S(OLO) PRO FORT<UN>AR(UM) MEDIOCRITATE
AD FOR(UM) IUDEOR(UM) SIBI POSTERISQ(UE) <SUI IPSE> P(OSUIT)

AB URB(E) CON(DITA) M M C C XXI L AN(NIS) M(ENSIBUS) III D(IEBUS) II
P(OSUIT) XI CAL(ENDAS) AUG(USTAS)

(In the city of Rome, now being reborn in its former beauty, Lorenzo Manlio, with esteem for the homeland of his family, built this house, bearing the Manlian name, from the ground up, in proportion to his modest circumstances, on the Jewish Forum, for himself and his descendants, 2229 years, 3 months, and two days after the foundation of the city, on the 11th day before the Kalends of August [= 22 July 1476].)¹⁴

What was new, and what distinguished Manlio's house, was its builder's avowed intention. While the several minor spoliated fragments were displayed as *ornamenta* in customary Renaissance fashion, the presence and the pronouncement of the monumental inscription signaled far greater claims. Its text made its modernity unambiguous, yet its appearance declared its adherence to the classical past. This grand, public exercise in *aemulatio* elevated the practice of reuse that was fundamental to the display of *spolia* to a new conceptual level. In its epigraphic character, its language, and

variis epithaphiis & picturis Ro. exornata; cf. the related documents cited in Tucci, *Laurentius Manlius*, pp. 144–5.

14 Text and dating: Tucci, *Laurentius Manlius*, pp. 190–92, adapted (cf. the comments of Christian, in her review in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 61 [2002], pp. 578–9).

most unusually, by the form of its date, *ab urbe condita*, Manlio's inscription asserted itself as the equal of its ancient exemplars. The fact that the formula employed for the date has long proved puzzling is of less interest than the idea of continuity with the past that this method of historical time-keeping so dramatically manifests. In both form and content, the inscription proclaims that Lorenzo Manlio laid the foundation of his new house while thinking about his city and its heritage, no doubt in full cognizance of the tangibly ancient Roman character of the house's site. It declares Manlio a shining example not only of the classicizing aesthetic taste that distinguished the Rome of his time, but of the new historical consciousness of which his house provided so self-conscious an example, and of the contemporary social ideology of which that self-consciousness formed so central a part.

III

There can be little doubt that Asdrubale Mattei would have seen a clear distinction between his palace and Lorenzo Manlio's house, which he surely knew, as it stood around the corner and only a couple of blocks to the south, on the main *piazza* of their neighborhood. The distinction was not simply a matter of urban scale or architectural splendor, although the two houses differed greatly in these regards. The differing patterns of collecting and display, and the resulting contrast between public spectacle and private contemplation, mark an aesthetic and historical transformation wrought by the early modern period on the very notion of Rome's aristocratic urban dwellings. And, at the heart of these distinctions lay a contrast between *spolia* and things that were created in *aemulatio antiquitatis* – fundamentally, a debate about the difference between what was old and what was new.

Yet another example, drawn from the same neighborhood, recasts this temporal distinction in more decisive form. Less than a hundred yards to the east of the house of Lorenzo Manlio stood an ancient Roman building amidst whose remains the medieval church of Sant' Angelo had been built. In 1569, a woodcut illustration to the first edition of Bernardo Gamucci's *Antichità della città di Roma* claimed to depict the façade of the church (Fig. 7.3), but this was hardly the case. Rather, this was an image of the pagan structure before it had been transformed to serve as a Christian one. Gamucci realized that it had once been the monumental entrance to an ancient Roman portico. The general identification had long been made by other antiquarians, and Gamucci's visual reconstruction belongs to a series of similar drawings, all of them early archaeological attempts to envision the remains of the portico in something like its antique splendor. A *titulus* on a sketch of the plan that accompanies the very similar reconstruction by Giuliano da Sangallo (d. 1516) in the *Codex Barberini* (Fig. 7.4) makes its purpose plain: "This is the plan of Sant' Angelo



Fig. 7.3 Sant' Angelo in Pescheria, in Bernardo Gamucci, *Le antichità della città di Roma*

where they sell fish in Rome, as it was in antiquity." The similarity of these drawings is obvious, and many such sixteenth-century reconstructions appear to have originated not as studies of the actual remains, but as replicas of other early works of Renaissance "paper archaeology".¹⁵

The structure is now known to have been the Portico of Octavia, a temple precinct facing the Circus Flaminius, in the Campus Martius, just west of the Capitol.¹⁶ It was named by Augustus in honor of his half-sister Octavia, when he refurbished the old Republican Porticus Metelli and its enclosed temples dedicated to Jupiter Stator and Juno Regina (Velleius Paterculus, 1.11.3). The first emperor also added twin libraries for Greek and Latin texts, and probably the large exedra behind the restored temples, known to Pliny the Elder as the *curia Octaviae* (*Natural History*, 36.28), where the senate is said to have met outside the city's sacred center, *extra pomerium*. The libraries are reported to have burned in the great fire of 80 CE during the reign of Titus (Dio, 66.24.2) and they were possibly rebuilt by Domitian (Suetonius, *Domitian*, 20.1); the complex burned again (in 191?) and was restored by Septimius Severus and

¹⁵ Gamucci, *Le antichità*, fol. 137v is probably derived from a drawing by Giovan Antonio Dosio (now Florence, Uffizi, inv. 2507Ar), which was in turn engraved by Cavalieri: Dosio and Cavalieri, *Vrbis Romae aedificiorum*, No. 5. The Sangallo drawing is Vat. Barb. Lat. 4424, fol. 35v; facsimile in Huelsen, *Il Libro di Giuliano da Sangallo*, vol. 1; cf. vol. 2, pp. 52–3. A full list of such drawings has been compiled by the Census of Ancient Works of Art known in the Renaissance (see above, p. 22).

¹⁶ See Olinder, *Porticus Octavia*, and now Viscogliosi in Steinby (ed.), *Lexicon topographicum urbis Romae*, vol. 4, pp. 141–5, with recent bibliography.

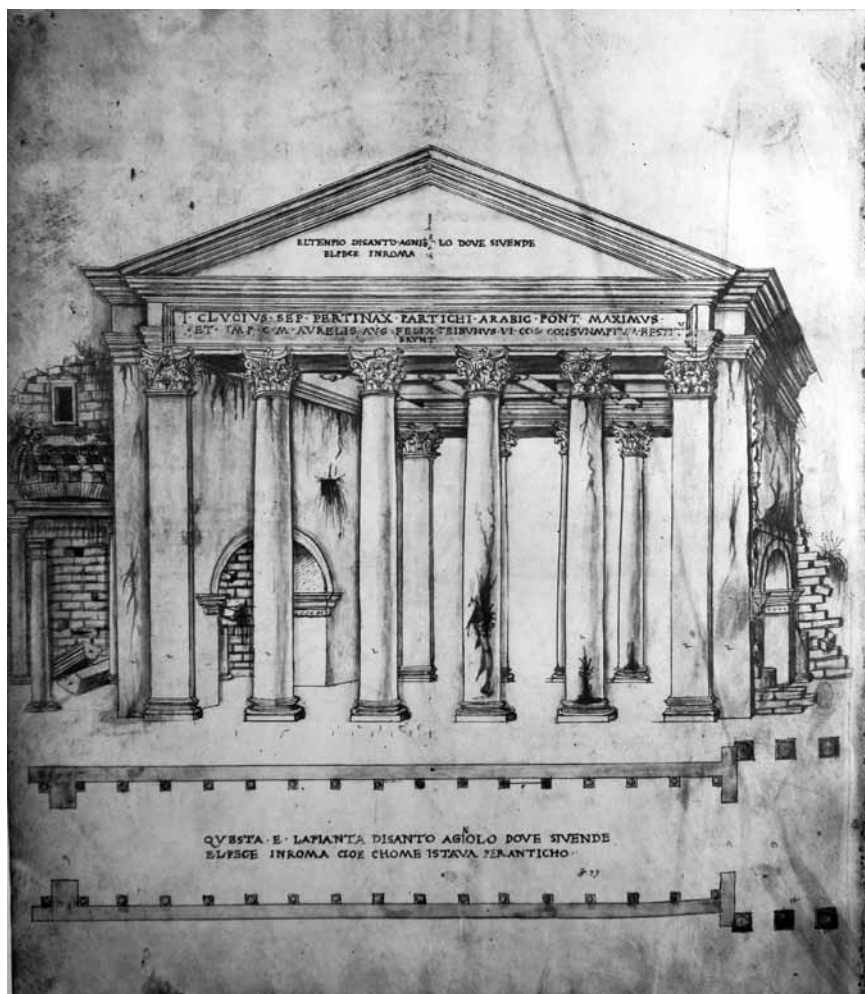


Fig. 7.4 Sant'Angelo in Pescheria, drawn by Giuliano da Sangallo, Vat. Barb. Lat. 4424, fol. 35v

Caracalla in 203, as the inscription that still survives on the pediment reports (CIL 6.1034).

The complex, much battered by the elements and the ravages of time, nevertheless survived through the centuries. At some point, the main entryway, or *propylon*, was incorporated into the façade of a church dedicated to the archangel, later known as Sant'Angelo in Pescheria on account of the fish market that was long established there.¹⁷ The rear façade of the portico's

17 Sant'Angelo in Pescheria: Armellini, *Le chiese di Roma*, pp. 130–31.

monumental entryway had provided the stable forms against which the medieval church was constructed, and a part of the portico itself, enclosed by walls with inset arches, had functioned as a pronaos, or narthex. And this is probably how the Renaissance knew the Porticus Octaviae – as the surviving ruins of a once grand civic structure, ruins that had become merely a part of the complex architectural fabric of Roman city life.

It is not at all clear how much of the ancient structure's early history was comprehended in the sixteenth century, despite the fact that the ancient sources reporting that history were readily available by Gamucci's day, both in the original and in Italian translation.¹⁸ Francesco Albertini (1510) recognized that this was the site of the Circus Flaminius; Poggio Bracciolini had believed that the columns belonged to a temple dedicated to Mercury (1448), and a century later (1554), Palladio would still concur. Gamucci makes no mention of these identifications, and also discounts the belief that the ruin had been a temple dedicated to either Mars or Juno, preferring to regard it as the remains of a portico,

perche le sue colonne seguitano dall'una all'altra parte senza vedervi continuatione di altri edificii, che accompagnino quella opera, come si sarebbe convenuto, se fosse stato Tempio; non havendo che fare la detta chiesa con il detto edificio; perche come si puo vedere nel disegno, questo portico non ha altro che tetto, colonne, & quattro pilastri d'ordine corinthio; & si puo conoscere benissimo qual che egli servisse per coloro, che nelle cose d'architettura hanno qualche discorso, havendo esso due frontespicii.

(because its columns follow on one side and the other, without seeming to be a continuation of other structures [for example, a *cella*] that accompany the monument, as would happen if this had been a temple. The aforesaid church [San't Angelo] has nothing to do with this structure, since, as one can see in my illustration, this portico retains nothing more than its pediment (*tetto*), its columns, and four pilasters in the Corinthian order. And what this [structure] was used for can be well recognized by those who have some familiarity with architectural forms--since it has two frontispieces [= pediments].)¹⁹

Gamucci's interpretation of the remains was based on his knowledge of the Pantheon, whose intact survival offered a model for his reconstruction, despite the difficulties posed by the Pantheon's form. For that edifice's tripartite structure – with its rotunda, the so-called intermediate block with

18 Even in modern times there has been confusion between our Porticus Octaviae and another attested Porticus Octavia, despite the evidence of Festus (ed. Lindsay, 188), who contrasts the two (although Festus mistakenly says that Octavia was responsible for the former's construction). Cf. Marliani, *Vrbis Romae topographia*, lib. III, cap. XI, who seems to conflate them; Olinder, *Porticus Octavia*, supposes them to be one and the same.

19 Albertini, *Opusculum*, fol. F4r; Poggio Bracciolini, in D'Onofrio, *Visitiamo Roma nel Quattrocento*, p. 74; Palladio, *L'antichità dell'alma città di Roma*, p. 17; Gamucci, *Le antichità*, fols. 136v–137r.

its own pediment, as well as its portico – had long since puzzled antiquarians; Michelangelo had even claimed that it was built by three different architects.²⁰ Gamucci's own account, despite its far-from-accurate reading of the Pantheon's dome and its support, describes the building as having two porticoes, "one added by Marcus Agrippa, the other which was integral with the fabric [that is, the rotunda] as it was erected", and it is clear that this interpretation provided the model for his commentary on the remains of the Portico of Octavia, whose columns seemed disconnected from anything (*altri edifici*) that might be construed as a temple.²¹

Gamucci and other antiquarians realized that, despite the fact that they were ancient, the extant remains were not the *original* portico. Gamucci goes on, seemingly to explain the pristine form of the structure in his illustration:

Non è stato già dal fuoco tanto deformato & guasto, che in lui non si conosca la bella maniera de lavori, che vi erano per tutte le altre parti fuor che per le cornici, le quali mostrano essere state senza ornamento alcuno d'intaglio, & essendo tutto rimurato si dimostra a punto come è il detto portico ne' tempi nostri, essendo stato restaurato da Settimio & da M. Aurelio Imperatori dopo il grave incendio, che egli hebbe, come per il titolo si è dimostrato.

(It's not been so deformed and shattered by fire that one doesn't recognize the fine style of the work that was evident in all the parts other than the cornices, which seem to have been without any carved ornamentation. And having been walled up [= bricked in, on the sides, in front, and in back, where Sant'Angelo abuts it?] completely, it appears to be in our times exactly as it was restored by Septimius and Marcus Aurelius [Caracalla] after the fire that it suffered, as the inscription says.)²²

Thus Gamucci and his contemporaries recognized that this very process of "restoration" that their "paper archaeology" attempted had been accomplished more than a millennium before, when the new Severan portico had restored that which had come before it. Even if the pedimental inscription had not survived, the fact that the portico had at some point been restored might reasonably have been deduced by anyone entering the church. When looking up at the back side of the north-facing pediment – visible because it is unlikely that anything of the portico entryway's roof, not to mention its ceiling, had survived intact through the Middle Ages – one would have recognized that a new Severan version of the portico had been constructed, to a very great degree, of *spolia*, in all likelihood at least partly from materials salvaged from

20 Vasari, *Le vite*, vol. 4, p. 512.

21 Gamucci, *Le antichità*, fol. 156v: *tutte l'altre sue parti corrispondenti a tutto quel componimento, che raccolte insieme dimostrano un corpo perfettissimo; et quel che non meno del restante è maraviglioso, sono due portici, l'uno da M. Agrippa aggiunto, et l'altro fu insieme con la fabrica drizzato, si come da' frontespicij, che nella ortografia di fuori disegnati si veggono, si può trarrre.*

22 Gamucci, *Le antichità*, fol. 138r.



Fig. 7.5 Porticus Octaviae. Interior of pediment as restored in 203

the remains of the earlier version (Fig. 7.5). What Renaissance antiquarians like Gamucci attempted to restore was itself a restoration, indeed, an emulation, assembled from *spolia* of an architectural monument of the same genre, on the same site, yet one demonstrably different in style.²³

* * *

One wonders whether Asdrubale Mattei, Lorenzo Manlio, or Bernardo Gamucci recognized not only that the surviving entryway of the Portico of Octavia displayed *spolia*, but that, as a reconstruction (numerous times over) of a previous portico on the site, it was in some sense itself a *spolium*, as the site, the footprint, and the material fabric of a structure from centuries past

23 Despite Gamucci's comments, quoted above, it isn't clear that he understood that the side walls of the portico's *propylon*, between the columns, bricked-in save for their arched passageways, were a Severan transformation of its precursor – that is, of a piece with other late antique architectural forms – in contrast to the bricked-in front of the portico, which is clearly of medieval date: discussion in Gorrie, "The Restoration of the Porticus Octaviae" (with earlier bibliography). That the roof was missing by the sixteenth century is suggested by the awning over the fishmongers' stall depicted within the portico by Marten van Heemskerck (Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Album I, fol. 32r = Huelsen and Egger, *Die römischen Skizzenbücher*, vol. 1, pl. 33; vol. 2, p. 19).

were here reused in the formation of a new building. In other words, did any of our protagonists comprehend that the standing remains of the Portico of Octavia provided something of an ancient precedent for their own endeavors and accomplishments? For the observable facts about the portico's remains raised the twin problems of what the existing structure replaced, and what the relationship between its old and new instantiations might have been. But as in the case of Mattei's antiquities and his palace's inscription, it is not at all clear to what degree such distinctions of relative age – indeed, as we have seen, even between old and new – were always a major Renaissance concern.

We may distinguish the attitudes towards *spolia* and the past that we have been examining still more subtly. There is nothing in any of our brief dossiers that suggests an ability to divine – or an interest in divining – the precise periods to which any of these examples of *spolia*, whether architectural, sculptural, or epigraphical, refer. In none of our cases do we find any trace of that fundamentally historical interest in the past that was so strikingly presented in the famous letter to Pope Leo X by Raphael and Baldassare Castiglione, in which the Arch of Constantine's "Constantinian" sculptures are deemed "utterly clumsy, bereft of art or any decent design [while] those that come from the spoils of Trajan and Antoninus Pius are excellent and of a perfect *maniera*."²⁴ This sort of historical insight was clearly exceptional, although by no means isolated. By contrast, the examples of Mattei, Manlio, and Gamucci have suggested that, during the Renaissance, the widespread "modern" taste for things antique probably knew little – indeed, required little – of such discrimination. This was perhaps inevitable, and perhaps paradoxical, in an age that defined itself, in large measure, by a sense of its own *discontinuity* with the past, and by a conscious effort to reappropriate it.

Each of our three cases makes this lack of temporal discrimination plain, yet in differing ways. Gamucci never raises the question of the *original* portico and its date. His text concerned itself, as did all of the "restored" drawings of the Portico of Octavia, replete with measurements, in true empirical fashion, merely with what survived; the broader historical problems posed by the monument were largely ignored. This is all the more surprising since such reconstruction drawings and their measurements were not only a record of what had survived; their purpose was prospective as well as retrospective. Like so many Renaissance architectural studies of the ancient remains, these drawings marked an attempt to divine the arithmetical logic of the ancients' designs, so that not only might missing parts be imagined, but *new* structures might be made on their basis.²⁵ Amassed in codices and notebooks, with little attention to the differences in architectural style and date of their subjects,

24 Cited and translated in Rowland, *The Culture of the High Renaissance*, p. 229; cf. the discussion in Kinney, "Rape or Restitution of the Past?"

25 Arithmetical logic: cf. Wilson Jones, *Principles of Roman Architecture*.

such measured drawings are more than mere documents of that profound historical phenomenon that has given the Renaissance its name; they raise the related issue of historical concern for relative chronology. These drawings not only pose a question about what it meant to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries for ancient structures to be made “new” again, and about the historical consequences of a burgeoning ideology that regarded such *renovatio* as even possible; they also suggest how the re-emergence of antiquity – at its heart, a conception of chronology – might take place without temporal distinctions.

Lorenzo Manlio’s inscription, in spite of an explicit claim for renewal and its voicing of an implicit *continuity* that linked his era with that of the Roman past (*ab urbe condita*), is no different. In fact, the inscription’s proclaimed sense of continuity argues for the collapse of the very idea of historicizing discrimination between temporal eras and among the cultural productions that serve as their material representations. For Manlio, the *aesthetic* character of those productions – what his inscription calls Rome’s *pristina forma* – while not impervious to changes wrought by time, could still be “reborn” in its former glory. Thus, Renaissance monuments like Manlio’s inscription could stake a claim, by the appropriation of the form if not of the content of their models, that such *aemulationes antiquitatis* might stand beside the ancient works as their equals.²⁶ This attitude is even more apparent in the case of the *spolia* displayed at Asdrubale Mattei’s palace, where monuments of the distant past were wrenched from their chronological moorings; fragments were haphazardly married to others, whether ancient or modern; and new works of art vied for equal attention amidst them as they provided Mattei’s collection with the breadth, if not the authenticity, that would convey the desired aesthetic effect.

Thus we see how all three of our examples defined themselves by means of a dialectical reference to the past. The nature of that reference could take different forms, and the role of “past” elements – whether tangible, actual things, or merely the images and ideas they evoked – might serve in the ongoing elaboration of an ideology of *renovatio* in different ways. In each of these cases, one sees how the use of *spolia* was intertwined with a conspicuous and deliberate attempt to negate the great gulf of time that lay between now and then. Yet the precise role and significance of the relationship between present and past were subtly different in each of these three engagements with *spolia*, in the attitudes their uses suggest, and in the emphatically “modern” representational character that each of these works of architecture – whether real buildings or paper restorations – proclaimed in its day.

26 Cf. Panofsky and Saxl, “Classical Mythology in Medieval Art”.

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Authenticity and Alienation

Richard Brilliant

The great, wide-ranging, universalist art museums tend to compartmentalize their varied collections according to established criteria of the times and places of making and use, enclosed within a cultural envelope of programs and style. Historical scholarship coupled with connoisseurship together serve to establish these distinctive criteria; they are not inflexible, given the intrusive effect of new information, new discoveries. However construed, however justified, these chronological and stylistic divisions develop a particularized mode of presentation that suggests their historical validity, as if the past – the “then and there” – were effectively revived, even authenticated by programs of associative display.

Authenticity as a criterion of legitimacy and of aesthetic value enters into the parlance of the art market as the demonstrable connection between an identifiable creator or creators and the work of art thereby attributable. As a term of approbation, “authenticity” transcends its market application to encompass a romantic sensibility. This attitude was strongly asserted in the nineteenth century on the grounds that the connection between the creative artist and the work created was an essential ingredient not just in the work’s coming-into-being but, also, in its historical significance and present meaning. Thus, originality was especially prized!

Twentieth-century and contemporary efforts to broaden the definition of art and artworks, the disconnection between artist/author and his/her creation, and the postmodern attitude towards plundering the past have altogether compromised the aesthetic value of “authenticity”, if not its continued role in the art market, and with it the effort to validate originality.¹

Underlying the concept of “authenticity” is a positive attitude toward historical memory, the retention of the past and its projection into the present.

1 See Foucault, “What is an Author?”.

However partial or even fictitious that notion of a particular past may be, its invocation can both offer an instructive gloss on the contemporary present and redefine the constitutive role of tradition in shaping the sense of the past and its life in the present. In the art museum, fragmentary tokens of the memorable past are put on display as talismans of a past not to be forgotten. They are, in effect, culturally restorative, and, despite isolation, no less “original.” Their status as worthy of attentive interest is thus preserved.

Asserting intentionally the worthiness of the physical remnants of the past, or of another artistic culture, and projecting them into the present – whether in an art or ethnographic museum, or otherwise – constitutes the very foundation of a live (or living) artistic tradition, made available to the viewer.² This transference of the object of interest, together with its imputed meaning, into a new context of sensibility, energizes the act of appropriation, while tending to eradicate the marks of difference or strangeness.

Years ago, in *The Shape of Time*, George Kubler drew attention to the importance of “entrance”, the first considerable and influential instantiation of dominant artistic motifs, collectively emerging into prominence and altogether constituting the original expression of an historic style. Although Kubler was interested in identifying effective origins, he did not concern himself with the consideration of the re-emergence of the past (or of the “other”) as a distinct subset of the phenomenon of re-entrance. And that, too, could follow a similar evolutionary trajectory tied to diverse antecedents, later exploited for their image-value.

Spolia, which constitute a subset of the broader category of appropriation, involve the physical incorporation of artworks, or fragments thereof, into new artistic contexts; the term includes, as well, the replications of other originals or reproductive images of them, inserted for their iconographic and visual effect into later or “foreign” works of art. In effect, spoliation constitutes a form of identity theft, because the identity of the borrowed original in whatever form taken retains some associative value, even if only in the visual authority of its imagery.

Spoliation reintroduces the past and the “other” into the present; it can assume a variety of explicit or implicit forms or modalities of expression and focuses on things or the shadows of things once and still admired but no longer wholly situated at a distance. Spoliation further involves the removal of artworks from their places of origin and their subsequent display in novel visual environments, often, if not invariably, dedicated to asserting cultural and historical possession for contemporary viewers. In such circumstances, spoliation combines both a retrospective orientation and a proleptic coloration. For *spolia* to succeed as evidence of the swing between two sites, the original source cannot be fully obscured if the newly combined elements

2 Bosman, *The Power of Tradition*.

are to have meaningful saliency in the present. The Janus-like character of such ambivalent references endows spoliated artworks and monuments with their particular, synthetic historicity.

Spoliation involves shifting “presence” forward and is most effective when memory traces can be perceived or, at least, some awareness of the transgressive act of appropriation can be appreciated. Making something past and/or borrowed present again has a representative thrust because it involves reframing.³ In effect, reframing the appropriated element challenges the ontological aspect of that element, if knowledge on the part of the viewer is lacking. Some degree of prepared cognition in response to the implicit meaning of the spoliated element seems necessary so that the viewer can look beyond the thing, or image, immediately observed, or is induced to do so.

The ancient Roman world held itself in thrall to the cultural hegemony of Greece, especially after Marcus Claudius Marcellus’ conquest of Syracuse in the late third century BCE. He initiated the wholesale asportation of Greek works of art from Magna Graecia and, later, others followed his lead in Greece itself and in the Greek towns of the eastern Mediterranean. These looted works, often bearing the names of great masters, arrived in Rome as booty, tokens of Roman political dominance. The subsequent private and public display of Greek works of art – paintings and sculptures – and their frequent reproduction constitute a well-known aspect of Roman visual culture, for which the term “Greco-Roman” can be invoked. Of course, the transformation of Greek “originals” by copying⁴ or miniaturization, or by changes in medium, or by respectful emulation, or by reducing elements to formal dependence on principles of decor, exposes a cavalier Roman attitude about the physical and artistic integrity of the “originals” and their subordination into symbols of contemporary appropriation.

Respect for the sanctity of original works of art had never been Roman practice. The frequent recourse to the displacement and subsequent replacement of portrait heads and the defacing of censored inscriptions, common on public as well as private monuments, prove that even an original Roman work was not to be considered either physically or aesthetically inviolate. A lengthy public inscription, one of the largest surviving from antiquity, is to be found on the attic of the Arch of Septimius Severus in the Roman Forum; even now one can see the partial emendation of the inscription, the mark of politically motivated erasure readily visible as it must have been in the early third century when it was undertaken, thereby giving visual evidence of an Orwellian manipulation of the historical record. The same currency of historical knowledge was available to the ancient Roman viewers of the Arch

3 On presence see Domańska, “The Material Presence of the Past”; on the touchstone of the real: Ankersmit, “‘Presence’ and Myth”.

4 See Schwartz, *The Culture of the Copy*.



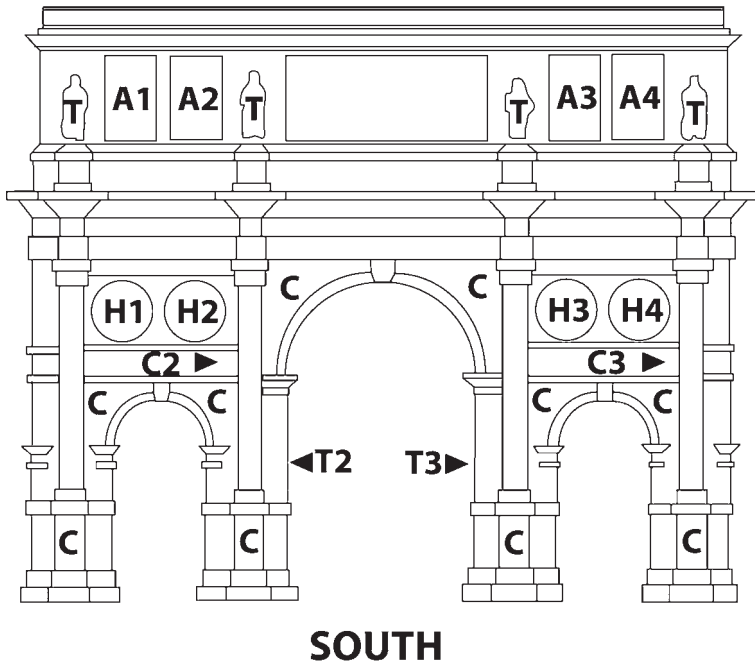
Fig. 8.1 Rome, Arch of Constantine

of Constantine (Figs. 8.1, 8.2) in 315 CE. The recomposition of the façades of the arch from other monuments in Rome must have been observed: fragments of monuments of Trajan, Hadrian, and Marcus Aurelius, possibly even from one of Maxentius, were incorporated into the fabric of the Constantinian arch, and the portraits of the imperial protagonists of an older triumphal art were recut according to the demands of the Constantinian program. Externally as well as internally, the earlier sculptures were brought up to date, reidentified, and recontextualized, thereby becoming fully realized *spolia in se* because the older artworks were used for a new patron, consistent with traditional, well-established Roman patterns of signification.⁵

The so-called *Maison Carrée* in Nîmes (Fig. 8.3) began its very long life more than 2,000 years ago as a prime example of Roman architecture erected in the provinces, a token of Roman imperial power and Augustan style.⁶ Once set within a political and ritual context as a temple of the imperial cult, the building came into being as a product of contemporary design and program,

⁵ Elsner, "From the Culture of Spolia to the Cult of Relics"; Barasch, "Visual Syncretism".

⁶ Balty, *Études sur la Maison Carrée*; Amy, "La Maison Carrée".



ARCH OF CONSTANTINE

T = TRAJANIC SOURCE
 H = HADRIANIC SOURCE
 A = AURELIAN SOURCE
 C = CONSTANTINIAN SCULPTURE

Fig. 8.2 Diagram of the Arch of Constantine, showing origins of figural ornament

adapted to the expression of Roman and especially Augustan policies in the provinces through the medium of noble works of art and architecture. The temple stood in the major public space of the ancient colony as a powerful symbol of Roman authority and as a worthy image of Roman architectural achievement. That achievement is still honored because, whether by good fortune or by the effort of its admirers, the building has survived the centuries as the best-preserved of all Roman temples, with the possible exception of the Pantheon in Rome, a building belonging to a very different architectural order and purpose. Neither the Maison Carrée nor the Pantheon serves the purposes for which it was created; neither has survived the vicissitudes of the centuries without incurring signs of repair and restoration; both owe their present reputation and significance to the fact of their survival in place, relatively intact, and to their iconic presence as prime examples of traditional



Fig. 8.3 Nîmes, the “Maison Carrée”

Roman temple design on the one hand, and on the other of the Roman mastery of concrete vaulting and the architecture of internal space.

The fortune and near-misfortune of the Maison Carrée in Nîmes present an instructive case study in the broad spectrum of appropriation from the absorption of architectural sources to spoliation, whether threatened or implied. The Maison Carrée, although its name is not ancient, is an Augustan monument, dedicated in Provence to the emperor’s grandsons, Caius and Lucius Caesar. The temple’s design incorporates Greek and Etruscan architectural precedents, as well as contemporary Roman metropolitan models derived from the Forum of Augustus in Rome. (So much for traditional architectural history!) However, the transformation of the peripteral colonnade, typical of classical Greek temples, into a vestigial cipher encased along the side and back walls of the temple’s masonry envelope, provides a measurable visual order but also serves as a sign of the complimentary emulation of the normative and prestigious Greek model, expressed here as a form of deliberate, self-enhancing appropriation.⁷

The potential for true spoliation, that is, the displacement and replacement of the temple, almost occurred in the seventeenth century when Colbert, minister to Louis XIV, planned to demolish the Maison Carrée in order to

7 See Chrościcki and Odinec, “On Directed Graph Models”.

reconstruct it in the park at Versailles. Once there it would have become a monumental, "antique" artwork among the collections of artworks gathered for the glory of the king. Although apparently intended to be preserved whole, unlike the fragmentation involved in conventional acts of spoliation, the Maison Carrée would have been completely decontextualized, removed from its porticated Roman precinct in Nîmes and put down in a park-like garden. There it would have stood in a formal landscape, an architectural object on display, no longer the center of imperial cult and urban space. Fortunately for the benefit of historical preservation, Colbert's plan was aborted.

This episode brings to mind the reconstruction of the Romano-Egyptian Temple of Dendur as part of the Egyptian wing in the Metropolitan Museum and its conversion into an exhibit, or the medieval cloisters re-erected in "The Cloisters" in upper Manhattan. Although the "original" fabrics of the temple and of the cloisters were preserved, the deconstructive action of relocation and reassembly not only reduced the monumentality and function of these works of older architecture, but offered the illusion of authenticity, as if their essential character were unchanged in the passage from monument to art object on display. This spoliative state of being seems to be a particularly egregious form of depredation, and thus a morally charged subset of wide-ranging appropriation. The act of removal, relocation, and re-presentation constitutes a specious assertion of authenticity despite the drastic alteration in circumstance, even if the building was rescued from oblivion by being included in the Met's Egyptian Galleries.

Yet the Maison Carrée remains an authentic simulacrum of itself (if that is not a contradiction in terms), although the concept of the simulacrum entertains some illusion of historical veracity. At least this ancient Roman temple survives on its original site, its structure and decor intact, in a space more or less like the ancient precinct, even if its originating purpose and function no longer obtain.

A more tempered act of appropriation, performed as emulative replication, is evident in Thomas Jefferson's adaptation of the Maison Carrée as a model for the new Virginia capitol in Richmond, even if the Corinthian capitals of the original had to be changed to Ionic because of the limited skills of his masons. There is some irony in Jefferson's reliance on a Roman dynastic monument as the proper model for the house of the governmental center of the Virginia Commonwealth in a manner deemed appropriate to a pillar of the emerging American Republic. *O tempora! O mores!*

Copies and imperfect reproductions of older artworks are spin-offs of the collecting impulse, and directly signify modest attempts at assimilating and emulating those works because they are deemed worthy of replication and possession, as if it were possible to bring into the present the best of the past whose aesthetic and image-values may have been underappreciated.⁸ In this

8 See Duro, "Quotational Art".

respect, “Neo-Classical” monuments, especially those produced under the influence of Winckelmann, may be rightfully considered aspects of spoliation *in re*, because Neo-Classical taste usually eschewed direct replication or borrowing in favor of creating new works in the old manner:

For a dialectal historian, these works incorporate both their pre-history and their after-history, an after-history in virtue of which their pre-history, too, can be seen to undergo constant change. They teach us how their function can outlast their creator, can leave his intentions behind; how its reception by the artist’s contemporaries forms part of the effect that the work of art has on us ourselves today, and how this effect derives from our encounter not just with the work, but with the history that has brought the work down to us.⁹

Medieval churches in the Pyrenees and adjacent areas of Spain (or Catalonia), whose wall and vault paintings were subject to decay and depredation, underwent extensive conservation after World War II. The paintings were removed and relocated magnificently in the National Museum of Catalan Art in Barcelona together with reconstitutions of their “original” architecture, in order to recreate the “true” environment of their former appearance for the museum-going viewer. However, where once form was in the service of function, the creation of an environment for religious ritual and experience, in the museum context the new programmatic function of display effectively converted Christian paintings into artworks for aesthetic enjoyment and the establishment of a possibly spurious connection with the medieval past.

Thus, a successful, even legitimate, effort at conservation and preservation led to acts of appropriation whose rationale bears an uncanny resemblance to the removal of medieval and Renaissance altarpieces from their original on-site locations in churches and their subsequent enshrinement in private or public collections as works of art detached forever from originating contexts. Indeed, the relocation of the Egyptian Temple of Dendur into a large well-lighted space in the Metropolitan Museum in New York and the incorporation of medieval cloisters into the museum appropriately named “The Cloisters” represent no less a dislocation of the originals and their subsequent transformation into artworks stemming from an earlier time, now on display as “authentic” relics of that time and culture. Of course, museums are filled with the *disiecta membra* of other cultures, often torn from their original contexts. We have become inured to the acts of appropriation implicit in these displays not only because they are so prevalent, but also because they are justified by the rapacious hunger for the reactivation of connections with the “other” through the medium of the immediate experience of art. The further step, realized at Carcassonne in southern France, a romantic

9 Walter Benjamin, “Edward Fuchs, Collector and Historian”: quoted in Camille, “Walter Benjamin and Dürer’s *Melencolia I*”, p. 58.

nineteenth-century medieval reincarnation due to the vision of Viollet-le-Duc on an ancient/medieval fortress site, is not so very different from the wholly recreated architectural display of Disney World, where notions of "authenticity" are given an entirely new meaning.¹⁰

Unlike the assemblage of paintings and sculpture taken from earlier or foreign contexts of making and experience and reinstalled in public museums, the transformation of whole bodies of buildings into museum displays poses the question of appropriation precisely because it relates directly to the ravaging of the originating program of existence and function.

The total substitution of extrinsic (new) values for the intrinsic values of the originating circumstance converts the building into an object for viewing, both as an artwork and as an historical/cultural presence. From its prior existence within a tradition, the building on display has been transformed into a representation of that tradition as an historical factum, shaped by a novel situation within the collective environment of the museum, in the end overwhelming the viewer. The token legacy, however admirable, can never be identical with its primary formation; attempts to recreate the illusion of wholeness by reassembling "all" of the parts of an ancient building seem fundamentally counterfeit. The dislocation from time, place, and culture remains absolute in the isolation of the building as an exemplary object, in its departure from the world to which it once belonged, and in its new transformative context:

Every image is a kind of knowledge and wisdom and is a subject of statements, all together in one, and not discourse or deliberation.¹¹

Spoliation and appropriation in their most totalizing instantiations, exemplified by the taking of a whole work of architecture and its re-establishment as a museum object, lead to that rupture between the facts of things and their misperception, typical of cognitive dissonance. The originating routes of reference and of function carried with them both implicit and explicit meanings, which were available to contemporaries who could look beyond what was then "obvious" in ways consistent with operative cultural norms. That earlier knowledgeable "look" perished long ago, to be replaced by another, very different in character and largely shaped by both retrospective historical and present aesthetic considerations, motivated by curiosity, that powerful stimulus to obtain knowledge and experience not otherwise preserved. Inevitably, the work of architecture, given the radical change in status brought about by its incorporation into a new environment, changes its significance once it has been transformed into a work of art in

10 See Sagoff, "The Aesthetic Sense of Forgeries".

11 Plotinus, *Enneads*, V.8.6, trans. A.H. Armstrong, Loeb Classical Library, 5 (Cambridge, MA, 1984), p. 257.

its new time and viewing circumstance, no less worthy of an interpretive appreciation.¹² Appropriation, then, creates an uncertain connection between the past and the present, shaped by the predominance of one polarity over the other and the mitigating factors of historical knowledge and source recognition, when and if they are present. The retention of the original must fail! Breaking the hermeneutic circle of connection between the work of art, its creator, and its time of making involves compromising its historical origin and formative relations. Spoliation, by contrast, seems to assert claims for truth in representation, at least in the act of representation itself, alienated from claims of authenticity dependent on concepts of the primacy of an originating source. The truth value of visual images is much in question these days.¹³ Yet works of art in which spoliated elements and their recontextualization are commingled can offer their own version of truth through the manifestation of respect for the other, for the past, and for the exotic. That respect reflects the intention of any artist and architect, always directed to the creation of the most effective work of art for the present.¹⁴

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The Tribune Tower: *Spolia* as Despoliation¹

Annabel J. Wharton

Spolia is now an art historical term for the recycling of architectural fragments. It has lost its classical reference to the predatory confiscation and display of plunder necessary to the public spectacle of power. The ancients never forgot the blood that was essential to the aura of booty. Now, however, there are no denuded corpses. The dead are just buildings. This essay offers an example of a modern structure that despoils the past without anybody noticing. The Tribune Tower, a charming high-rise that contributes to the filigree of the Chicago skyline, appears utterly innocent. Only a careful observer recognizes the sacrifice made by other buildings for its construction of a corporate image.

Despoiling History

In 1922, the Chicago Tribune Corporation held an international competition to secure the design “for a structure distinctive and imposing – the most beautiful office building in the world”. “The World’s Greatest Newspaper”, the newspaper itself claimed, “had helped materially in the building of a world-city (Chicago) in a new world; it would give to that city the ultimate in civic expression – the world’s most beautiful office building.” Implicit in the competition program is the assumption – remarkable for the 1920s – that an office building might offer the consummate symbol of civic order. The

1 I want to thank Professors Dale Kinney and Richard Brilliant for including me in the Clark Colloquium from which this collection arises. I am also grateful to Mary Jo Mandula, vice president and general manager of the Tribune Properties, for providing access to the fragment files in the Tribune Tower. I wish to express my appreciation to my colleagues in the John Hope Franklin Center of Duke University faculty seminar, “Recycle”, in which I presented a brief version of this text, for their helpful observations. I am most deeply indebted to Professor Kalman Bland, who critically read and commented on various drafts of this paper.

corporation was already displacing the state as the site of urban power and municipal pride; a building was the agent by which the new status of the corporation was reified.

Over 260 submissions were made to the competition, representing the work of the world's principal practicing architects. Entries ranged from the bizarre to the visionary. As required by the competition program, all of the submissions were technologically current, steel-frame high-rises. The modern body of the building was, however, in most of the entries, draped in historical garb – Egyptian, Classical, Byzantine, Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance. A few curiously literal submissions offered an ancient building or ancient building part as a modern structure (an Egyptian column, a Roman triumphal arch). More entrants proposed history on a pedestal. Famous buildings from the past (the Parthenon, Hagia Sophia, Westminster Abbey's Chapterhouse) were set on top of immensely high bases, themselves adorned with historically appropriate, but structurally irrelevant architectural motives (fluted pilasters, marble grills, flying buttresses). A few notable submissions presented structures that acknowledged the modernity of their own moment. The Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen offered a handsome proto-Deco skyscraper. Walter Gropius and Hannes Meyer from the Bauhaus in Germany presented a building that fully realized the form-follows-function aesthetic invented locally by Louis Sullivan and his fellow architects of the Chicago School; it prefigured the glass and steel monoliths of the 1950s and 1960s. The *Chicago Tribune* published the submissions in 1923 in a lavish folio edition (Fig. 9.1). Most of the entrants were published again, in a small paperback, by Rizzoli in 1980 (Fig. 9.2). First prize in the competition and the commission for the new corporate headquarters were awarded to the neo-Gothic proposal of the New York firm of Hood and Howells.

The Chicago Tribune Tower Competition has canonical status. It is consistently included in the syllabi of college courses on American architectural history. The competition's status was reasserted in 1980 by Rizzoli's publication. This two-volume work not only reproduced the old entries for the Tribune Tower Competition, but also whimsical new ones, offered by the world's most prominent postmodern architects for a tongue-in-cheek revival of the Tribune Tower Competition. The competition's canonical status is, in part, explained by its perfect embodiment of an architectural anxiety that all buildings elicit: what was constructed exhausts the space, resources, and energy for the alternative that might have been. What could Chicago have had instead of what it got – a delicate Gothic gesture to the past? The corporation missed an opportunity to make a radically innovative intervention in the urban landscape, choosing instead to represent itself in the remarkably conservative and symbolically ambiguous form of a cathedral-skyscraper.

Another, more self-conscious reason for the competition's historiographic prominence is the compelling summary it presents of a particular phase in

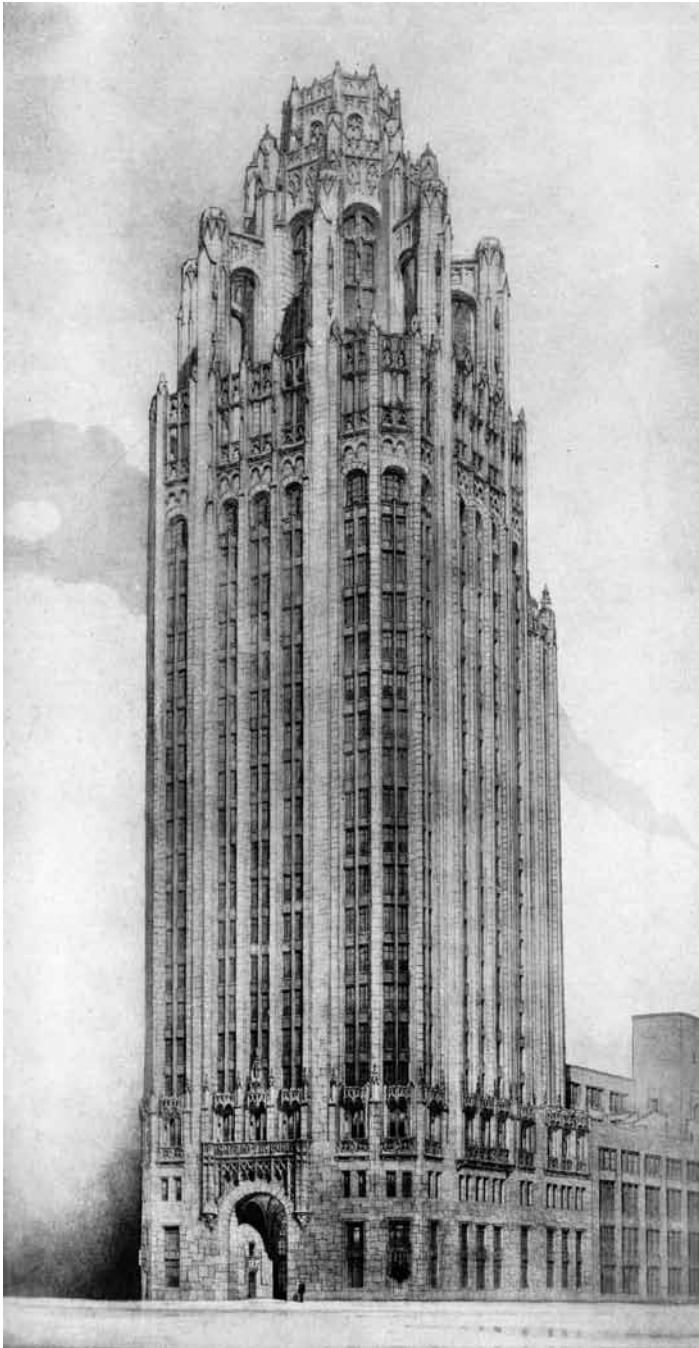


Fig. 9.1 Chicago Tribune Tower Competition, 1922, the winning submission by Hood and Howells

J. D. LELAND & COMPANY
Boston, Mass.



Plate Number 125

I. N. PHELPS STOKES
New York City



Plate Number 126

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Fig. 9.2 Chicago Tribune Tower Competition, 1922, Classical and Byzantine submissions.

American architecture: Eclecticism. Eclecticism names the United States' architectural predilection from the mid-nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries for dressing buildings in any one of a wide variety of historical styles (Classical, Gothic, and Renaissance primarily, but also Romanesque, Byzantine, Islamic, and others). In office high-rises and in homes, if not in churches and synagogues, Eclecticism is characterized by a disconnect between the figure of a building and its anatomy. The historically derived form of an eclectic structure is distorted by the industrial technologies (steel, glass, concrete, elevators, electricity) in which it is realized and by the new functions (commercial, industrial, civic) it must perform.

Eclectic architects or their patrons characteristically selected a particular historical style because of its symbolic connotations. The Oxford/Cambridge connection is regularly cited as the grounds for rendering elite private universities (Princeton, Chicago, Yale, Duke) in Collegiate Gothic. The gravitas and rationality of the Classical were named in its selection by their boards

for museums, banks and government structures. Of course, the meaning of style is flexible. Early Christian spiritual purity explained the choice of Byzantine form for the Catholic Cathedral of Westminster; Byzantium was used as a model for theater design because of its orientalist eroticism. Patrons apparently assumed that a structure was imbued with the spiritual or moral values associated with its prototype, but those associations were commonly popular and loose. The panorama offered by the eclectic variety of buildings in American cities at the turn of the century was titillating not only visually, in its variety, but also ideologically in its totalization of history.

The excess of promise offered by the architectural plurality of the past perhaps explains the silence of the Tribune Tower Competition program on the subject of style. It specified only that the building had to be "beautiful". Correspondingly, the designers of the winning entry, Hood and Howells, exclusively ascribed a formal significance to their choice of Gothic, despite the style's spiritual, chivalric, and northern European connotations. The firm's statement was included in the publication of the competition:

Our desire has not been so much in an archaeological expression of any particular style as to express in the exterior the essentially American problem of skyscraper construction, with its continued vertical lines and its inserted horizontals. It is only carrying forward to a final expression what many of us architects have tried already under more or less hampering conditions in various cities. We have wished to make this landmark a study of a beautiful and rigorous form, not of an extraordinary form. (*Chicago Tribune*, "The International Competition for a New Administration Building for the Chicago Tribune")

The apparent randomness of the selection of the building's historical referent as well as the unstated understanding of style as fashionable apparel is vividly revealed in the discrepancy between the modern concrete and steel body of the high-rise and its Gothic cladding. In 1923, Louis Sullivan, the famous architect and mentor of Frank Lloyd Wright, aptly characterized the relation between the structure of the Tribune Tower and its historical costume. The Gothic crown with its non-structural flying buttresses necessitated the pseudo-piers of the lower region:

If the monster on the top with its great long legs reaching far below to the ground could be gently pried loose, the real building would reveal itself as a rather amiable and delicate affair with a certain grace of fancy.²

The structural features of medieval Gothic become, in the modern Tribune Tower, ornament.

The Tribune Tower misrepresents Gothic architectonics; it also erodes the meaning of the Gothic. The Gothic was the iconic architectural product of

2 Sullivan, "Chicago Tribune Competition", pp. 156-7.

Catholic Europe from the twelfth through the fourteenth centuries, an era that was deeply spiritual, however profanely people acted. In the Middle Ages, usurers – that is, *anyone* who gained wealth from money – were doomed to an eternity in Hell. The Tribune Tower was built for a community that was fundamentally profane, however spiritually some members behaved, and in an age in which monopolists were revered. The corporate appropriation of the Gothic desecrates its spirituality. It sucks meaning from great tithe barns, Tudor cottages, cathedrals. The Tribune Tower, it could be argued, despoils history.

Accusing the Tribune Tower of pillaging the past and leaving it more impoverished than it was before is, of course, hyperbole. Overstatement of the corporate headquarters' historical violence does, however, serve some purpose. Eclecticism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries consistently deployed historical forms conscientiously; serious architects studied and understood the structures of the past and appreciated the craft of their details. They produced beautiful drawings of the buildings that they promised and rendered them solidly in stone as well as steel and concrete. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, we find ourselves in another moment of architectural eclecticism. But now the application of past motifs relentlessly reveals contemporary designers' pathetic ignorance or wanton misuse of their models. Stone, even as a ¾-inch facing, is rarely used. Dryvit – basically stucco over Styrofoam – is the building material of choice.

The charge of cruelty to the history of architecture made against the Tribune Tower may be summarily dismissed. Absconding with the image of a building from the deep past doesn't even contravene cultural property rights in most countries. However, a second allegation of misappropriation might be prosecuted. The Tribune Tower assaults historical buildings, abducting not their form but their substance.

Despoiling Buildings

At street level, the north, south and west façades of the Tribune Tower are studded with nearly one hundred and fifty pieces of other places (Figs. 9.3 and 9.4). Bricks, stones, marble and metal slices, all of readily transportable dimensions, are embedded in the Tribune Tower's lower exterior walls. Some of these fragments have been there from the building's founding. Others have been added over the years. A shard from the World Trade Towers and a tile from the Sydney Opera House are the most recent additions, introduced in 2002 and 2006 respectively. All of these pieces are physically nondescript. They have no intrinsic exchange value and, with perhaps a few exceptions, they make no aesthetic claims. Only their accompanying inscriptions save them from utter anonymity. The site of origin of each fragment is engraved in the wall beside it in ceremonial uncials. How do these bits of buildings



Fig. 9.3 Chicago, Tribune Tower, street view of the façade

and topographies, brought to Chicago from all fifty states and from many countries around the world, work? Certainly all of these chunks function indexically; that is, each scrap serves as a sign of the entirety of its originating locus. A small bit of stone, identified by its label as the Great Pyramid of Gaza (*sic!*), evokes a mighty structure. But the force of such evocations varies.



Fig. 9.4 Chicago Tribune Tower, section of the façade with fragments of the House (sic) of Parliament, the dome of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, the pyramid at Gaza (sic! inscription in the process of correction) and two pieces from temples in Cambodia

At first sight, the fragments seem to work as souvenirs. A souvenir is a portable object that is kept by its procurer as a repository of the personal memories of the site from which it came. Like a tourist's photograph, when put on display, the souvenir also acts as proof to others of its possessor's experience of the alien or exotic. Souvenirs take a variety of forms: figured tee-shirts, coffee-mugs, head-scarves, miniatures. Souvenirs also include physical pieces of a place. Sometimes such fragments are remade to be functional or decorative as well as memorable (wood from the hull of the HMS *Victory* involved in the Battle of Trafalgar made into an ashtray; shells from Shell City, Delaware, made into coasters). At other times they remain as they were found. That most remarkable of early American tourists, Mark Twain, describes several instances of such collection in *Innocents Abroad*. One such incident occurred in Turkey:

After gathering up fragments of sculptured marbles and breaking ornaments from the interior work of the mosques [in Ephesus]; and after bringing them, at a cost of infinite trouble and fatigue, five miles on mule-back to the railway depot, a government officer compelled all who had such things to disgorge! He had an order from Constantinople to look out for our party, and see that we carried nothing off. It was a wise, a just, and a well-deserved rebuke, but it created a sensation. I never resist a temptation to plunder a stranger's premises without feeling insufferably vain about it.³

The collection of pieces of particularly venerated places is certainly ancient. A box of carefully labeled bits of the Holy Land was found, for example, locked for centuries in the Holy of Holies in Rome when it was opened in 1908. The Protestant traveler's indiscriminate pilfering of sites as a means of personally possessing them seems, however, peculiarly modern.

Published discussions of the Tribune Tower fragments assert that the collection originated in the same way as the potential assemblages of Twain's fellow travelers. Colonel McCormick, a member of Chicago's conservative social elite and later one of the *Chicago Tribune's* two editors and a major shareholder, was a correspondent in battle-devastated Europe during World War I. During visits to Ypres and Arras, he selected pieces from the debris of the cathedral and the city hall respectively as souvenirs. These, so the story goes, became the kernel of the Tribune Tower collection.

The collection of fragments for the tower was occasionally expanded by the *Tribune's* friends. Many of these unsolicited objects were politely returned to those who offered them. Stones from Petra donated by a colleague and business associate were accepted. In a letter to McCormick written in 1930, Dr. Henry D. Lloyd, a friend of McCormick and a stockholder in the *Chicago Tribune*, described in Twain-like terms the acquisition of his contribution:

3 Twain, "Innocents Abroad", p. 248.

My dear Bert: Having the Tribune fairly constantly in mind for its exceeding goodness to all its stockholders, when I was in Petra last March it occurred to me that it was conceivable you might like a stone from Petra to set in the front wall of the Tribune Tower. In as much as I had my own boat in Beirut, and was traveling by automobile, the problem of transportation was simplified. These stones are now in Boson awaiting your pleasure in the matter. One is the half of a small sandstone boulder which I found in what they call the High Place. This High Place was formerly used as a place of worship and is interesting because of the fact that to make an obelisk they chiseled away the whole top of the rock rather than build an obelisk on the top. The significance of this red sandstone boulder I do not know. Then from the man who ran the camp I got what I imagine is the capital of a small column. This is a yellowish-gray sandstone. Again I do not know from what particular locality or building in Petra this piece came. (Archive of the *Chicago Tribune*, "Arabia")

Most of the bits on exhibition, however, were acquired not through gifting but on order. McCormick delegated the task of gathering pieces of the sites and buildings that he selected or approved to his correspondents. In 1923, for example, McCormick wrote succinctly to Charles Daily, the *Tribune's* Far East Correspondent: "I suppose you can get us a variety of interesting stones from Chinese monuments for our new Tribune Tower, to be placed in the entrance hall." Six months later, Daily reported some success in the completion of his complex task:

I enclose a letter and memorandum from the Foreign Office, the latter also in Chinese, certifying to the genuineness of the tiles and the circular carved stone. These date from the early part of the fifteenth century, and are from the Winter Palace in the Forbidden City erected on the removal of the capital to Peking in 1421. The carved guardian angel is from the ruins of a temple in Honan province, and the gift to me of General J. W. N. Munthe, who will write me a letter as soon as the date is definitely established. It is the opinion of some experts that this stone was carved in the sixth or seventh century, but others are of the belief that it was in the first century of the Christian era ... It was no easy task to obtain these specimens and the Foreign Office aided me in co-operating with the Ceremonies Department of the Imperial Household, with which ordinarily no intercourse is held now that the Manchu dynasty is overthrown. (Archive of the *Chicago Tribune*, "China")

The Chinese government apparently acceded to Colonel McCormick's desires. As a letter written in 1934 by another *Tribune* correspondent, John S. Steele, indicates, other agencies did not acquiesce so willingly:

I am shipping one of these stone cannon balls to you. I don't know whether it would be wise to label it as coming from Pevensey Castle [the cannon ball in the wall of the Tribune Tower is, indeed, fully labeled]. The Office of Works refused to let us have one on the grounds that they were part of an ancient monument. But we acquired it by the process which, I believe, was known in the war as "winning". Anyhow it should arrive in Chicago within the next couple of weeks. (Archive of the *Chicago Tribune*, "England")

McCormick's control of collecting continued through the 1940s and 1950s, though his directives were funneled through the *Tribune's* Building Manager, Keith B. Capron. Capron records the process:

On March 16, 1946, I received a memo from the Colonel starting out, "In picking the stones from the different states, let's try to get stones that have some other interesting value ..." I interpreted that as an assignment to get stones representing each state, and we have been working on them ever since. First we compiled lists of interesting, historic, or unique stones for each state from which the Colonel made his choice. Then we wrote to newspaper editors, government park bureaus, care-takers, historians, etc., to get stones. We now have all but three, and fresh hopes for final action on them ... In addition to state stones, we have 13 stones from World War II battlefields which Mr. Maloney [James Loy ("Pat") Maloney, Managing Editor] apparently requested [under McCormick's direction] from our foreign correspondents. (Archive of the *Chicago Tribune*, "General")

Some recipients of a *Tribune* request for a fragment were certainly puzzled. Dr. Jeremy Dupertuis Bangs of the American Pilgrims' Museum in Leiden remembers reading the perplexed interdepartmental exchanges at the Regionaal Archief Leiden concerning the *Tribune's* solicitation of a piece of the home site occupied by the Pilgrims before they sailed to America on the Mayflower. He recalls that the solution was to send a brick of approximately the correct date from the city's archaeological warehouse.⁴ But there were surprisingly few rebuffs to the *Tribune's* solicitations. Only one is found in the *Tribune's* file drawer of correspondence on the fragments. J. D. Hartford, editor of the *Portsmouth* (New Hampshire) *Herald*, responded to Capron's request in 1946 for a piece of Fort William and Mary at New Castle:

Frankly, I am not over enthusiastic about such operations as we all realize that if such a practice became general there would be nothing left of any of the old historical landmarks throughout the country. If you would settle for some fine white beach sand from any one of our nationally known bathing beaches, to use as a part of some of your concrete mix, we would be glad to accommodate you. We do not, however, feel like aiding anyone in dismantling our historical landmarks. (Archive of the *Chicago Tribune*, "New Hampshire")

Capron then turned to the State of New Hampshire Forestry and Recreation Commission to get what he wanted. A fragment from Fort William and Mary is now embedded in the Illinois Street façade of the Tribune Tower.

The pieces of the landmarks of Arras and Ypres salvaged by Colonel McCormick himself are not displayed on the walls of the Tribune Tower. Objects that might have represented McCormick's own memories were apparently never included in the exhibition. A piece of a place gathered

4 Unfortunately, André van Noort, Archivist of the Regionaal Archief Leiden, has been unable to locate those documents (e-mail exchange with Dr. Jeremy Dupertuis Bangs).

under order, stolen, or sent as a gift is not saturated with the sentiments and consciousness of its possessor. The incrustations on the walls of the Tribune Tower look like souvenirs but do not act like souvenirs.

If the shards on view at the Tribune Tower are not conventional souvenirs, perhaps they can be productively thought of as relics. Relics are portable pieces of the holy which are so filled with the spiritual aura of their sacred source that they perform in their place: healing the sick, punishing the evil, even raising the dead. Relics are most often associated with holy bodies, martyrs, and ascetics who in different ways gave up their bodies for the sake of the divine. But relics may also be taken from things that were suffused with the divine through direct contact, like the Cross of the Crucifixion or the House of the Virgin. Numerous sites associated with the sacred are represented on the walls of the Tribune Tower, including the Parthenon, Rouen Cathedral, St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna, Westminster Abbey, the Mormon Temple, the cave of the Sibyl in Cumae, Saint Sophia, the Mosque of Suleiman, and the Shrine of Hibiya Daijingu in Tokyo. Embedded in the Tribune Tower, however, these fragments of sacred sites attract no particular attention, perhaps because they are not satisfactorily framed. Relics tend to work better when they are elaborately embellished. A relic in an impressive reliquary displayed within a venerable church, like the skull of Saint James on the high altar of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, tends to perform more miracles than a particle of the True Cross sold on eBay.

One of the fragments of the holy at the Tribune Tower is elaborately enframed. Chips from the ceiling of the Cave of the Nativity in Bethlehem are inset in a gilded star on the interior of the entrance wall. The acquisition of this relic is described in a letter from L.S. Chakales, Chief of Bureau to Keith B. Capron, Tribune Tower Building Manager, May 8, 1950:

The fragments I gave to Colonel McCormick are from the actual Cave of the Nativity. They were scraped from the ceiling of the cave by the Archbishop of the Orthodox church, which is situated directly above the cave and through which every denomination must pass to reach the shrine. Under no circumstances can the archbishop be identified publicly as the source. However it could be stated they came from a person who had access to the cave. Their authenticity can be guaranteed and proven by the archbishop and the mayor of Bethlehem, but the archbishop naturally would be reluctant to make it public. However the mayor, Issa Bandak, I am sure would confirm them. We were his guests in his home which is situated in a convent which is a part of the church of the Nativity for Christmas, 1949, when the fragments were given to us. In fact, it was his influence that brought about the archbishop's unusual action. We went down the morning after and saw the white spot in the roof of the cave. In addition, we also got four tiny pieces of mosaic that were scraped away. We attached great importance to the fragments. It must be recalled the cave has been there for 2,000 years and it remains virtually intact. In that time souvenir hunters should have leveled the area for miles around, but miraculously it remained intact. I would like to emphasize

these fragments came from the cave in which Christ was actually born and not from the immediate vicinity. (Archive of the *Chicago Tribune*, "Bethlehem")

Chakale's story is remarkably similar to early Christian narratives of the acquisition of relics by minions of rich and powerful believers. Throughout the Middle Ages, the clandestine acquisition of relics was always more legitimate than buying them. But despite being displayed in an elaborate reliquary-like setting and despite being acquired in a relic-like way, the dust from the Cave of the Nativity attracts no pilgrims and performs no miracles. The particles of the Cave look like relics, but, like the other fragments associated with religious sites in the walls of the Tribune Tower, they do not act like relics.

If the shards displayed on the Tribune Tower do not function individually and overtly as souvenirs or relics, do they operate collectively and covertly as ideology? Juxtaposed are fragments from places famous and obscure (the Arc de Triomphe and ruins at Birecik, Turkey), ancient and modern (the Great Wall of China and the Berlin Wall), pastoral and violent (Reims Cathedral and the Battlefield of Trenton), real and imaginary (Taj Mahal and Hamlet's Castle). Although no order is apparent in the fragments' arrangement or, for that matter, in the choice of sites represented, nevertheless, as with all randomness that is closely enough watched, patterns emerge. Perhaps this display acts to naturalize the political, economic, and cultural pretensions of their exhibitor.

Certainly the Tribune Tower Competition program explicitly declared that the building would function iconically as "the most beautiful office building in the world". It also implied that the Tribune Tower, emblematic of the organization that it housed, was the epitome of civic virtue. Such a claim suggests that the Tribune Tower contributes to national prestige as well as local status. Indeed, indices of nationalism are particularly prominent in its collection of fragments. Two of the conventional monuments associated with American independence are included: Philadelphia's Independence Hall and the White House. Colonel McCormick's intervention in acquiring pieces of the White House is documented in a memo of May 19, 1950 from Capron to *Chicago Tribune* correspondent Walter Trohan, in the Washington Bureau:

On May 14th there was an Associated Press story in the Tribune mentioning White House souvenirs. The Colonel sent the clipping to me requesting that I "get a good one". Would it be an imposition for me to ask your assistance in securing "a good one"? (Archive of the *Chicago Tribune*, "Washington, D.C.")

After considerable difficulty, a fragment was procured.

National identity is further buttressed with pieces from destination landscapes (Mount McKinley, the Badlands of South Dakota, Mammoth Cave in Kentucky, the Petrified Forest in California). If the display includes natural wonders only from the United States, the bit of moon rock on exhibition may

be regarded as the promise of a future American colony. Famous citizens are celebrated along with citizens not-so-famous, but important in one way or another to the *Tribune* (Lincoln's home and his first tomb, Colonel McCormick's family home, the birthplace of Elijah Lovejoy, newspaper man and anti-slavery martyr). But perhaps the most numerous references to American greatness are of a noticeably belligerent nature. Sites of American military triumph or inspirational defeat are particularly prominent (the Alamo, Custer's last stand, Pearl Harbor, Bunker Hill, Omaha Beach, Fort Sumter, Corregidor, the World Trade Towers).

More subtle are the references both to white superiority and to white benevolence. There is, for example, a small but revealing collection of places where European men encountered acquirable territory in America (Port Louisa on the Mississippi where white men first met Iowa; Fort Clatsop, Oregon, associated with the Lewis and Clark expedition; Helena, where De Soto entered Arkansas, and Tawasa, Alabama, where De Soto sojourned; Santa Maria Island in the Azores where Columbus landed; the lost colony on Roanoke Island, North Carolina; site of the Rune Stone in Kensington, Minnesota, providing evidence of early Scandinavian presence). Included also are sites associated with white solicitude for blacks (John Brown's cabin in Kansas and his fort at Harper's Ferry). In the same vein, an anti-Confederate bias is discernible. Some southern states are, indeed, represented by references to subjugation (site of the Battle of New Orleans) or ignominy (Confederate Prison, Andersonville, Georgia). Is the exhibition of fragments of sites associated with American moral and military ascendancy from John Brown's cabin to Omaha Beach meant to assure us that the *Tribune* constitutes the continuation of that trajectory?

The territorial reach of the Tribune Tower fragments is not limited to sites of national interest. Prominent are pieces of prestigious foreign buildings. Perhaps they are intended to reify the assumption that the Tribune Tower surpassed the historical structures from which they came. Are the cultural accomplishments represented by the Taj Mahal in India, the Colosseum of Rome and Suleiman's Mosque in Istanbul subordinated to the achievement of the *Tribune* and its skyscraper? Are the buildings of the past and the institutions that they embody – the Palace of the Forbidden City in Peking, the House [*sic!*] of Parliament in London, the Arch of Triumph in Paris, Luxembourg Palace, the medieval portal of Charlemagne at Aachen, the Citadel in Jerusalem – displaced by the Tribune Tower and the perfect democracy of which purportedly the *Tribune* is the voice?

For an architectural historian who investigates the Tribune Tower, its display of fragments might well reflect on the political concerns and pretensions of the hard-core Republican Colonel McCormick. But any suggestion that those interests were somehow realized in their exhibition would be perverse. The collection is hardly a persuasive affirmation of state

sovereignty or isolationism. If any specific political messages were encoded in the fragments embedded in the façade of the building, they remain undecipherable. Whatever McCormick's irrecoverable intentions might have been, the pieces of other places found on the façade of the Tribune Tower have little political effect. As ideology, the Tribune Tower collection miscarries.

An innocent viewer of the Tribune Tower collection does not see a political agenda, but she may well grasp the newspaper's pretense to national and international compass. An amorphous invocation of *reach* may well be understood by the broader audience. Like a cabinet of curiosities, the Tribune Tower façade impresses by the remarkable array of things that it presents. But in its impressive pastiche of places, the fragments are reduced to mere curiosities. A curiosity is a thing that appeals only because of its oddity. It is a simple diversion. Its fascination lies largely in its context as part of a collection. The fragments thus function as a supplement to the exaggerated meaning claimed for the building itself. The exhibition unconsciously compensates for a deficiency and thereby identifies a lack. Like the Gothic form of the structure, its façade fragments suggest a peculiarly American concern with a dislocated past; they archive the contradictions of a nostalgia for a missing history and the pride in the brief American enterprise as the evolutionary fulfillment of all earlier ones.

The Tower's fragments do not act like souvenirs, relics, or ideological spoor. In fact, they hardly act at all. Of the thirty or so Chicagoans whom I have questioned about the Tribune Tower, only one had ever looked at it carefully, four knew about the fragments, and the rest were familiar with the building but ignorant of its incrustations. The scraps of old buildings and distant sites embedded in the building are largely ignored. Hard as they might try, the Tribune Tower fragments are continually frustrated in their attempt to capture the observer's interest. There is simply too much competition from the urban theater of which they are a small part. On the rare occasions when they are noticed, in their guise as a collection of curiosities, they do function in some ways as *spolia*. Of course, they cannot be *spolia* in the full classical sense of the term, since they offer no proof of the ruination of their original settings. Many of the most familiar sites included in the display are, after all, still intact: Westminster Abbey, the White House, Reims Cathedral. The apparent wholeness of these originals belies the authenticity of their separated parts. The fragments may even appear fictive; any claim of physical supersession which they might make appears ridiculous. But for the careful observer, they might act like classical *spolia* at least in the implicit reference to the destructive plunder central to the pre-modern spectacle of military might. The pieces certainly attest to the power of their possessor to appropriate them in the first place. To those who attend to the mélange of fragments from meaningful sites, the display certainly suggests something of the *Tribune's* past confiscatory power. Now the corporation is in bankruptcy.

Despoiling Bodies

The *Tribune's* pieces of other places, leveraged from the quiet integrity of their origins to the noisy disintegration of their display, have been depleted in the service of exhibition. It is not just the fragments themselves that lose coherence with their excision. In the case of physical structures, the removal of any part necessarily depletes the whole from which it comes. To make more sense of the plight of the originating source perhaps it should be treated more as a body and less as an inert object.

Buildings, like humans, are the products of their generation and their location. Unlike commodities or texts, buildings, like humans, are unique and impossible to duplicate. Buildings are inevitably formed by both a place and a history. They are brought into existence, they have a youth, a maturity, a senility, a death. Buildings are not fixed things; they change, they grow, they get sick, they die, or, more commonly, they are murdered. The acts of buildings might even be compared with the acts of their human counterparts: those acts are similarly overdetermined – that is, fraught with more conditions in their social circumstances or personal histories than are necessary to account for them. It does not seem absurd, therefore, to imagine that buildings might even be valued as agents. Agency presumes some kind of intervention or effect. Who would deny that a building modifies the behaviors of its users? A further assumption, based on the habits of philosophical and theological discourse, is often made that agency also necessarily involves *consciousness* (either human or divine). It would follow that as a building patently has no consciousness, it cannot be an agent. But the assumption that agency requires consciousness is erroneous. Although buildings do not act consciously, neither do humans, much of the time. The acts of human agents, though persons may be assumed to have consciousness, are often demonstrably *not* the result of rational reflection, but rather the conditioned or mechanical response to physical, social, or personal circumstances (freezing temperatures, conformity, addiction, and the like). And humans are commonly held legally or morally responsible for acts taken without a consciousness of their consequences (as when a driver falls asleep at the wheel of his moving vehicle).

By analogy, buildings would not require consciousness to be held responsible for their acts. Here, standing in law complements the claim for buildings as agents. Things were, after all, held culpable for the injuries they inflicted on humans until the abolition of the law of deodand in 1846.⁵ More recently, the courts have recognized that an agent may be exempted from any requirement of consciousness when acting on behalf of a principal. Corporations – for which a claim for consciousness seems extremely peculiar – are commonly accorded the status of agents. Indeed, philosophers have gone

5 Pietz, "Death of the Deodand".

so far as to debate the claim that corporations are moral persons. Perhaps there is a public advantage to holding a corporation responsible for its effects; yet recognizing the corporation as a moral agent seems somehow obscene, perhaps because of the suspicion that if corporations did have intentions, they would be unrelentingly venal. In any case, no claim is made here for buildings as moral persons. But if corporations are considered actors independent of their CEOs, vice presidents and shareholders, certainly buildings might be treated as agents. After all, most buildings are more socially responsible than many corporations.

Juridically less successful, but apparently more ethical, are efforts to extend legal standing to the things closest in their responsiveness to human beings, that is, animals and machines. A particularly persuasive legal argument has also been made to extend standing to natural things.⁶ Many of the same arguments can be made for buildings. Like some rivers or trees, some buildings have authoritative public bodies prepared to review actions inconsistent with their well-being. Like some rivers or trees, some buildings have a legally recognized worth independent of their use value. Rivers and trees do not have – but it has been argued that they should have – executors empowered to institute legal actions at their behest on the model of executors who act on behalf of minor or comatose persons. Such rights might equally be claimed on behalf of buildings. Understanding buildings as bodies is less difficult if buildings are considered agents or if buildings have legal standing.

What are the rewards for considering a building as a body? If a building behaves like a body, it also demands to be engaged as a surviving witness of various pasts. Once it is recognized that a building has a life, architectural historians may be less likely to focus their scholarly attention exclusively on a structure's origins and more likely to treat its full biography. It may well be argued that, as is the case with humans, buildings only reveal their youth once their old age is taken into account. Acknowledging the building as a body may also allow us to understand more fully our anger at it when it treats us badly. Finally, and most relevant to the work at hand, a building treated as a body explains our empathy with its abuse and destruction.

The *spolia* of the Tribune Tower reinforce a sense of the distinctive embodiedness of architecture. They help us resist the bad intellectual habit of textualizing buildings. Texts cannot meaningfully suffer from despoliation in the same ways as material culture. A quotation may be a fragment of a text, but its excision leaves its source intact. Indeed, this kind of appropriation privileges the site of its origin rather than demolishing it. Certainly, a plagiarist robs a text, but the damage to the originating site is obscured, not, as with *spolia*, celebrated. Conversely, treating a building as a body also provides leverage for rethinking architectural *spolia*. The fragments of the

6 Stone, *Should Trees Have Standing?*.

Tribune Tower suggest how *spolia* might be put to use as conspicuous signs of coercive authority, even as they themselves fail to contribute effectively to the corporation's status. These pieces of other places fail to impress their contemporary American viewers with the might of the building that displays them; they succeed only in amusing the few who notice them. They certainly do not shock their witnesses as evidence of violence perpetrated on other architectural bodies; in this, they provide further evidence of how immune contemporary audiences are to the shock of implicit destruction. Considered as body parts, the fragments embedded in the skin of the Tribune Tower retain something of their gritty materiality. They were not grafted to the Tower's membrane as necessary transplants; they contribute nothing to the recipient's health. In contrast, the body from which a slice was excised is depleted by its loss. Each fragment implies a successful physical assault on its source. As parts cut from one body and displayed on another to enhance its status, these fragments revive some of the dead, pre-modern implications of *spolia*.

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A Medieval Monument and its Modern Myths of Iconoclasm: The Enduring Contestations over the Qutb Complex in Delhi, India

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On November 14, 2000, Delhi's newspapers announced that a group of Hindu nationalists planned to hold a *yajna*, a ritual Hindu ceremony related to cleansing or purification, at the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque in the city.¹ The Quwwat-ul-Islam is one of the earliest mosques still extant in the country and its larger campus, which includes the minaret (the Qutb Minar), graves, colleges, and additional structures, is listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Monument. Built by the first Turko-Afghan rulers of Delhi in the late thirteenth century, the mosque is constructed largely from the *spolia* of Hindu and Jain temples (see above, Chapter 6). Closer examination of its structural elements, arranged in the form of a courtyard mosque, reveals animal and human ornamentation, and there has been an ongoing debate over whether the plinth on which the mosque sits was once the base of a temple complex. On November 15, when members of the VHP (Vishwa Hindu Parishad) and the Bajrang Dal gathered outside the Qutb complex, they made their demands clear to the police who prevented them from entering. The 150–200 members of these radical religious groups demanded the right to pray within the mosque complex as well as to hold a Hindu purification ceremony (*dev-mukti yajna*) in order to “liberate” the Hindu icons that they claimed were “trapped” in the mosque (Fig. 6.3). Citing the popular notion that the mosque was built by the destruction of 27 Hindu and Jain temples more than 700 years ago, the protestors demanded the right to redeem this trauma of the distant past in the

1 The event was widely reported in the English language dailies as well as the vernacular press, for example, the *Hindustan Times*, 14 November 2000, p. 3 (English); *The Pioneer*, 15 November 2000, p. 3 (English); *The Hindu*, 15 November 2000, p. 1 (English); *Punjab Kesri*, 15 November 2000, p. 7 (Hindi); *Navbharat Times*, 15 November 2000, p. 5 (Hindi); and *Dainik Jagaran*, 15 November 2000, p. 5 (Hindi).

present moment. In the tussle that ensued between the protestors and the civil authorities, the latter were able to prevent the mob from entering the Qutb complex and several protesters were arrested and imprisoned, thus averting the possibility of a large-scale riot.

While the situation was eventually defused by the authorities, this incident raises important questions regarding a nation and its representative monuments. What exactly in the physical form of the Qutb complex gives it this Janus-like identity, at once national trophy and a site that evokes an alleged trauma of the past? As one of three World Heritage Monuments in Delhi,² a symbol of national pride, and an example of India's fine Islamic architecture, the Qutb complex brings in a handsome revenue for the state and is a prime tourist attraction. But if there is a vocabulary to narrate the aesthetic beauty of the Qutb, to define and categorize it as a visual example of the introduction of Islamic architecture into the subcontinent and to codify it as a monument of national importance, there is also a startling paucity of words to address the supposed iconoclastic origins of a monument from which defaced sculptures of Hindu gods and goddesses frequently tumble, and plaster falls away during restoration work to reveal figural representations of animals and birds that in all probability were created for a faith other than that of the mosque's Muslim builders. How is modern India to narrate the past of this national monument as a site of appropriation and possible iconoclasm? If the Qutb complex is representative of the antiquity of Delhi, what in fact does it convey about the origins of the city, and by extension of the larger nation-state of India?

In this essay, I attempt to understand the various interconnected representations of iconoclasm in the Qutb complex through the three modalities of colonialism, nationalism, and postcolonialism. I argue that in each of these historic moments, the Qutb complex (and its components) has been appropriated as a signifier that oscillates between representations of a past and ideological constructs of the contemporary moment. In juxtaposing these vignettes, I hope to reveal the epistemological legacies left by the colonial authorities in nationalist discourse as well as in postcolonial India, while also attending to the divergences between colonial, nationalist and postcolonial narratives of iconoclasm.

The first section investigates the colonial project of architectural preservation in India, which was in large part conceived as a modern strategy that differentiated British imperialists from their Muslim predecessors. In many ways it could be said that archaeology and preservation served the same propagandist functions for the British imperial apparatus that iconoclasm is assumed to have served for the early Islamic empires of South Asia. In

2 The other World Heritage Monuments in Delhi are the fifteenth-century tomb of Humayun, the first Mughal emperor of India, and the Red Fort built by the Mughal emperor Shahjahan in the seventeenth century.

the early bureaucratic efforts of preservation, it is difficult to distinguish a clear colonial policy towards monuments constructed of *spolia*. Indeed, in their eagerness to distinguish themselves from the empires of the past, and to separate themselves from their own recent history of looting and pillaging in India, British authorities fashioned themselves as the knowledgeable stewards of Indian antiquity and heritage. The colonial bureaucracy of heritage management that was put in place by the mid-nineteenth century was rooted in the strict taxonomies of historical periods – that is, Hindu, Islamic, Buddhist – a system that left little room for the articulation of syncretism or for histories of reuse and appropriation. This first section thus examines the epistemological legacy of colonial systems of representation, in which the “Hindu” elements of the Qutb complex were separated from its “Islamic” elements as individual objects of reverence and historical import.

The second section of the essay focuses on one strand of nationalist discourse in India, which is the precursor of contemporary political groups such as the VHP and Bajrang Dal. This particular rhetoric of religious nationalism (broadly referred to as Hindutva) is based upon the reclamation of India (defined here by the modern geographical boundaries of British colonization and the post-Partition nation-state) as the ancient holy land of the Hindus. Supporters of Hindutva ideology base modern India’s claims to sovereignty upon this religious notion of India as a homeland for the Hindus, with diminished rights for religious minorities such as Christians, Muslims, Jews, and Zoroastrians. Proponents of Hindutva have found particular utility in the specter of iconoclasm, which they have appropriated time and again to detail the historic subjugation of an indigenous Hindu nation at the hands of foreign Muslim invaders. This second section, therefore, looks at representations of the Qutb complex by Hindu nationalists as a site of historic trauma.

The third part of my essay investigates the more “mainstream” appropriation of the Qutb complex as a monument of national importance and its inclusion in the cultural index of secular India’s past. The representation, circulation, reproduction, and repeated transmission of the Qutb as an icon of India’s past glory contest the more radical definitions of the nation mentioned before, but also position the monument precariously between reverence and rejection, as part national trophy and part memorial to trauma. In this section, I ask how we might understand the triangulated identity of the Qutb complex, as mosque, national monument, and temple. Do these positions represent a continuation of colonial taxonomies of difference or their postcolonial collapse?

Prefatory to the three main sections of the essay, a brief explanation of the complex and its architectural components is necessary. I will refer in this essay to two distinct elements within the larger Qutb complex: the minaret – the Qutb Minar (Fig. 6.2) – and the mosque, Quwwat-ul-Islam (Fig. 6.5). The origins of both structures date to the late twelfth century, and both are therefore contemporaneous with the establishment of Islamic rule

in the northern part of the subcontinent. From the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, successive rulers periodically enlarged both buildings and added more structures to the larger complex, making it difficult to attribute either the mosque or the minaret to a single patron. Nevertheless, most of the building activity in and around the complex was confined to the Sultanate period, that is, the reign of Islamic slave kings in North India.³ Whilst the Qutb complex and its surroundings served as the urban center from the twelfth well into the fourteenth century (with the Quwwat-ul Islam mosque maintaining its importance as the main congregational mosque of the city), the complex was eventually trumped by a series of cities built by successive Islamic empires. Like many other monuments in the subcontinent, the Qutb complex was to gain renewed attention in the late nineteenth century, due to the new technology of photography and its use in documenting Indian antiquities, the growing interest in and professionalization of heritage preservation by colonial bureaucrats such as Alexander Cunningham, and the emergence of urban history as a new genre of Urdu scholarship, as evidenced by the 1847 publication of Syed Ahmad Khan's *Âthâr ul-Sanâdîd*.⁴ It is this moment in the middle to late nineteenth century that I have chosen as the starting point for an analysis of the Qutb complex.

Archaeology and the Colonial Gaze

The early colonial representation of the Qutb complex and the related issue of iconoclasm should be positioned within the larger project of heritage management, especially as it unfolded in the subcontinent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. British colonialists in India saw themselves not only as the rightful successors to the political legacy of the Mughal Empire, but also as paternalistic guardians of India's ancient heritage. In a speech to the annual meeting of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1900, Lord Curzon, Governor General of India, stressed the duty of the colonial government to protect and preserve ancient monuments around the country. He claimed that heritage conservation had more urgency in India than in many other countries, where historic buildings were often adopted and cared for by wealthy individuals or societies. Curzon ascribed the difference to the fact that many historic buildings in Europe were "invested with a publicity" that saved them from falling into disrepair and languishing in neglect like their Indian counterparts.⁵

3 For a detailed historical analysis of the Qutb complex, see Page, *Guide to the Qutb*. See also Flood, "Lost in Translation", and Chapter 6 above.

4 Khan, *Âthâr ul-Sanâdîd*.

5 India Office Records, Mss. Eur. F112 487, p. 3. Among the factors that threatened historic monuments in India, Curzon notes the following: "Many of them are in out of the

In the face of disappearing heritage and the public's callous disregard of the remnants of an ancient past, Curzon pointed out that the British government's mandate of conservation was made all the more urgent by its difference from the despotic eastern empires that had ruled India in the past. He asserted that while Hindus, Muslims, Rajputs, and Sikhs had engaged in iconoclasm and destruction as a legitimate means of announcing their own power, the era of European colonialism would be markedly different. "Reason" would prevent the European colonizer from desecrating or defiling any monument, be it Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, or Islamic:

Every, or nearly every successive religion that has permeated or overswept this country has vindicated its own fervour at the expense of the rival whom it had dethroned ... dynasties did not spare their own members, nor religions their own shrines. If a capital or fort or sanctuary was not completed in the life-time of the builder, there was small chance of it being finished, there was a very fair chance of it being despoiled, by his successor and heir ... The British Government are fortunately exempt from any such promptings, either of religious fanaticism, of restless vanity, or of dynastic and personal pride. But in proportion as they have been unassailed by such temptations, so is their responsibility the greater for inaugurating a new era and for displaying that tolerant and enlightened respect to the treasures of all, which is one of the main lessons that the returning West has been able to teach to the East.⁶

Eager to distinguish themselves thus from the empires of the past, colonial archaeologists were charged with the responsibility of managing and representing each object of antiquity with impartial judgment and on the basis of scientific evaluation of its historic worth.⁷ But while Curzon's emphatic arguments articulated an ideology for colonial archaeologists, they presented little pragmatic advice as to how sites of appropriation or spoliation should be represented in the modern era. Indeed, even as the colonial government remained committed to distinguishing itself from the "despotic" empires of the past, its policy concerning recovered *spolia* and monuments exhibiting *spolia* seems to have been largely ambivalent and averse to publicizing the possibility of iconoclasm. One obvious reason for this is a belief that

way places, and are liable to the combined ravages of a tropical climate, and exuberant flora, and very often a local and ignorant population, who see only in ancient building the means of inexpensively raising a modern one for their own convenience" (p. 4).

6 India Office Records, Mss. Eur. F112 487, pp. 6–7.

7 It should be mentioned that Curzon's demands for heritage preservation were not the beginning of archaeological preservation in India, which had come about four decades before, when Alexander Cunningham implored the colonial government to start a program for the preservation of ancient monuments. His efforts led to the establishment of the Archaeological Survey of Northern India in 1860. In addition, Curzon's emphatic exemption of the British from destroying Indian heritage overlooked the recent despoilment and looting of Delhi's monuments by British armies following the Indian Rebellion of 1857. See Lahiri, "Commemorating and Remembering 1857".

publicizing past iconoclasm could spark communal tensions between ethnic and religious groups in the present, an increasingly volatile issue in early twentieth-century north India.

The policies of the colonial government towards objects and monuments of *spolia* can perhaps be illuminated by the following examples. In 1926, when the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) was carrying out excavations at the fourteenth-century fort of Sher Shah in Delhi, three marble images of Jain *tīrthankar* (religious prophets) were recovered. The ASI reports of that year clearly state that attempts to look for a larger superstructure and signs of a pre-existing temple to which the sculptures may have belonged yielded nothing. As soon as the Jain community in the city heard of the findings, its members approached the ASI and asked to obtain the sculptures for worship. The request was granted and the sculptures were accordingly given to the Jain community, which in gratitude presented the Museum of Archaeology with a painting of the court of Akbar Shah II.⁸ The incident indicates that the colonial authorities saw the fort (built by a Muslim ruler) and Jain objects of *spolia* as aesthetically and culturally distinct entities, which could rightfully be separated from a single context and defined in distinction to one another. It also shows that the discovery of Jain objects within an Islamic site may have been interpreted instinctively as evidence of iconoclastic violence, which was promptly defused by transferring the fragments into the “neutral” and secular space of a museum or recontextualizing them within a temple.

Another colonial strategy for dealing with iconoclasm, particularly with respect to monuments such as the Quwwat-ul-Islam, in which Hindu and Muslim elements were visibly intertwined, was to isolate each element and classify it according to “aesthetic type” rather than identifying the compound itself as an aesthetic whole. The ASI’s system of classifying monuments and architectural styles followed schemata promoted by historians and bureaucrats such as James Fergusson and Alexander Cunningham, who divided Indian architecture into categories of Hindu, Muslim, and Buddhist, treating each as a discrete building typology corresponding to a distinct period of Indian history.⁹ The ASI followed this taxonomy in its own classificatory systems, and department officials were trained to identify and separate the Hindu elements from the Muslim elements in a single structure, as shown by an early slide in the ASI files of a monument in Krishnagiri in southern India (Fig. 10.1). This strategy of fragmentation became a way to parse single monuments into their Hindu, Islamic, and Jain components, with each element accorded a value that superseded its position within a larger historical and cultural milieu. This rigid system of cataloguing also became the primary means by which colonial

8 Hargreaves (ed.), *Archaeological Survey of India*, p. 12. According to the report, the idols were inscribed with the Hindu date of Vikram Samvat (1671 or 1614 CE), but were deemed to be of “no iconographical or historic interest”.

9 Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories*.

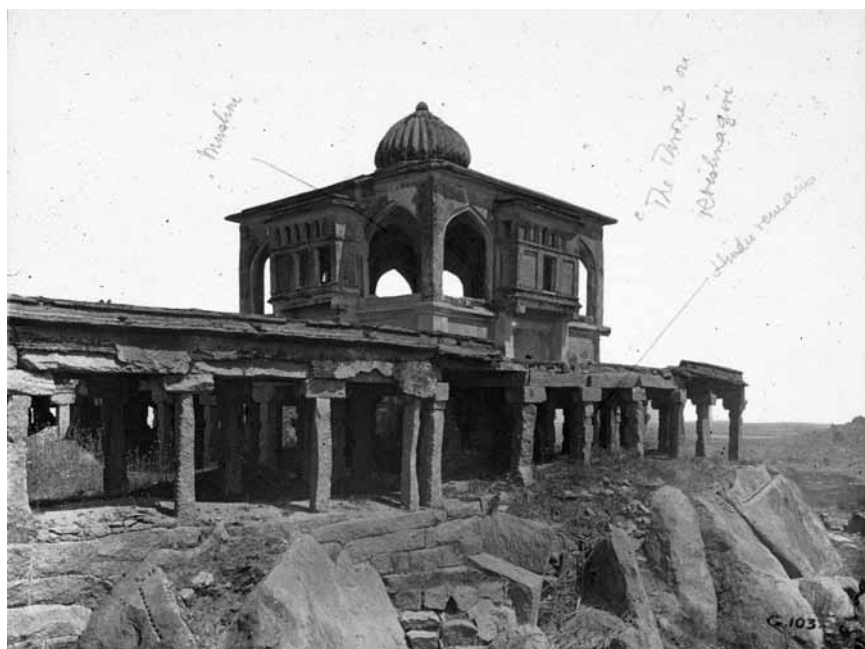


Fig. 10.1 Slide from the Archaeological Survey of India records (c. 1906) with identification of the trabeate base as “Hindu remains” and the arcuated superstructure as “Muslim”

authorities could circumvent the specters of iconoclasm, reuse, adaptation, and hybridity. In turn, monuments such as the Quwwat-ul-Islam became a sum total of parts, each to be analyzed in isolation rather than as components of a larger historical site.

It is within the larger context of colonialism and its concomitant mandate of archaeological preservation that I position the reception and transmission of iconoclasm at the Qutb complex. As mentioned before, there is ample material proof that the Quwwat-ul-Islam was constructed with the fragments of Hindu and Jain structures. As the ASI’s restoration and conservation of the mosque and its surroundings began in the late nineteenth century, various sculptures and carved architectural members tumbled out of both the mosque and the tower. This recovery of *spolia*, including such objects as the headless image of a Nandi Bull (associated in Hindu mythology with the God Shiva), an intricately carved sculpture of Vishnu, and a stone carving of a Jain *tīrthankar* carved with Qur’anic inscriptions on the reverse, has continued well into the late twentieth century. When found, the sculptures have either been cleaned up and left on the premises of the Qutb complex (often without any accompanying descriptions or contextual explanations) (Fig. 10.2) or



Fig. 10.2 Jain and Hindu *spolia* on display in the courtyard of the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque

displayed in the National Museum at Delhi. The colonial ambivalence about the *spolia* recovered from the Qutb complex has thus been perpetuated in postcolonial India, where each fragment is treated as an object of national heritage that transcends its religious connotations and is absorbed into the secular nation's pantheon of cultural symbols. I will return to this point later in the essay.

Another example of the colonial strategy of representing iconoclasm and reuse in the Qutb complex comes from the Iron Pillar in the central quadrangle of the mosque (Fig. 10.3). The Iron Pillar predates the mosque and may be from the fourth century BCE. It bears inscriptions that are clearly pre-Islamic, and its prominent position within the mosque has led scholars to believe that the mosque was built around it, in all probability to show continuity with the sovereign powers that antedated the region's Muslim rulers. Indeed, the re-erection of "Hindu" victory pillars in courtyards of medieval mosques is not uncommon in and around Delhi.¹⁰ The Iron Pillar is something of a technological feat, as it has resisted rusting over the centuries even while exposed to the elements. Colonial archaeologists reinterpreted the pillar as a symbol of "Hindu" skill and technological prowess. Indeed by 1871, a plaster cast of the Iron Pillar's capital was on display at the South Kensington Museum

10 See Flood, "Pillars, Palimpsests, and Princely Practices".



Fig. 10.3 View of the Iron Pillar in the courtyard of the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque (c. 1872)

and in 1924 a wooden replica of it traveled to England to be displayed at the Indian Pavilion of the British Empire Exhibition.

Regarding the 1924 facsimile of the pillar, the ASI's annual report mentioned that "care was taken that the replica should be an exact copy of the original and to this end the Gupta inscription and other details were faithfully reproduced"

on the basis of a full-size drawing that accompanied the pillar to England.¹¹ This example illustrates the manner in which the pillar circulated as a symbol of Hindu antiquity outside the Islamic context to which it belonged. The pillar's historicity was measured only in terms of its significance as a "Hindu" object. Just as the Qutb complex was reduced to a *bricolage* of distinct Hindu and Muslim parts, the enduring identity of the Iron Pillar was fixed as a Hindu element, an identity that was not altered by its central and prominent position within one of the earliest mosques built in India.

The strategies employed to represent and preserve the various parts of the Qutb complex do more than reveal the conceits upon which colonial histories of the subcontinent were framed. They also point to colonial anxieties concerning the issues of reuse and appropriation, which made it impossible to narrate the history of medieval South Asia without acknowledging the implied clash between Hindu and Muslim cultural systems. Contrary to the ubiquitous examples of overlap between Hindu and Jain, or Hindu and Buddhist cultures, the connection of Hindu and Muslim histories was mired in an assumed antagonism that escaped any synergistic or symbiotic explanation. Despite the colonial archaeologist's ostensibly rational, objective, and apolitical stance towards the monument, his gaze in fact fetishized each element as separate from the others, to be evaluated by the historical gauges of Hindu *or* Islamic, rather than Hindu *and* Islamic. Through fragmentation of the monument into its discrete Hindu and Muslim parts, the colonial system of categorization presented it as a compendium of fractured pieces rather than a composite whole. In narrating the Iron Pillar or the Qutb Minar as purely aesthetic objects, the colonial government invested them with the power to evoke either a glorious Hindu or an Islamic historical past. Through the activities of the ASI, both the Iron Pillar and the Qutb Minar acquired the ability to conjure up distinct histories in which Hindu and Islamic skill and prowess each triumphed in direct opposition to one another, before both declined and were subsequently abrogated by the modern British Empire.

Nationalist Narratives of the Qutb Complex

In the winter of 2002, I accompanied an American friend on a tour around Delhi. Our tour guide – a long-time resident of the city – led us to the Qutb complex and explained the history of the monument. In her version of events, in the late twelfth century, as Muslim invaders descended on Delhi and wrested power from its current rulers, they ordered the indigenous population, their newly conquered subjects (all of whom are assumed to have been Hindus), to gather

11 *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India, 1923–24* (New Delhi: Swati Publications, Reprint 1990), pp. 10–11.

at the site where a temple had stood. The invaders ordered their subjects to convert to Islam *en masse*, and when the latter “patriotically” refused they were slaughtered and the temple duly razed and rebuilt as a mosque. Our tour guide ended with the statement that this bloody event and the site on which we were currently standing were the origins of Islam in India. While this is merely the subjective anecdote of one tour guide, it reflects a similar narrative repeated by other guides who lead tourists through the Qutb campus, and by newspapers and books dedicated to reclaiming the “true” history of the site as one of Hindu oppression and subjugation.¹² Rather than scrutinize the validity of this account or the motivations of the speakers, I choose to focus here on the representation of iconoclasm in the narration of pre-Islamic or “Hindu” India. In particular, I will analyze the recurring proposition that the flourishing of Islamic aesthetics in medieval monuments such as the Qutb complex went hand-in-hand with a brutal violence against Hindus and the mutilation of their bodies. I focus on this supposed corporeal annihilation because of contemporary Hindutva appropriations of “mutilated” Hindu and Jain architectural fragments in the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque as signifiers that both represent the past and portend the future. Metaphorized as the mutilation of Hindu bodies in the past, these fragments are made to signify the contemporary friction between Hindu and Muslim communities in the nation-state and the profound rupture between a seamless, indeed tranquil, essentially Hindu past and the violent introduction of Islam into the country.¹³

The links between Islamic iconoclasm and Hindu trauma should be contextualized within a larger history of radical ethno-religious nationalism, such as the Hindutva agenda of inscribing India as the Hindu homeland. Starting in 1947, the Hindu Mahasabha (the representative organization of the religious and cultural Hindu right) published a newspaper titled *Organiser*.¹⁴ Following the agenda of the Mahasabha, this newsmagazine was dedicated to the presentation of a national identity for India as “Bharat”, a nation-state based on an essential cultural and historical Hindu identity. Among its regular articles and editorials, the *Organiser* featured a weekly column known

12 For literature forwarding claims that the Qutb Minar is originally a Hindu monument, see Godse, *Qutub Minar* and Trivedi, *Visnudhvaja*.

13 Cf. Flood, “Signs of Violence”.

14 The origins of Hindutva as a political movement can be traced to the establishment of the Hindu Mahasabha, a political party established in 1915 to represent the interests of Hindus within the robust anti-colonial struggles of the time. The Hindu Mahasabha lost much of its influence and political clout following Indian independence and particularly after 1948 when Mahatma Gandhi’s assassin was found to have close ties to the organization. Today, the Hindutva political brigade is represented by the Sangh Parivar, an umbrella organization for three separate but ideologically similar organizations: the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Bharatiya Janata Party, and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. For more information on the historical rise of the Hindu right in India, see Basu, *Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags*.

as “Holy Bharat”, which was dedicated to the cataloging and description of the historical landscape of the new nation-state of India. The weekly article featured not just detailed descriptions of various Hindu temples (some of which were represented as wondrous feats of technology and built innovation, while landscape sites were portrayed as part of a sacred geography), but also of historic civic structures such as Nalanda, the famous Buddhist university founded in the seventh century; strategic forts like Chittor, which were built by the Rajputs, and entire urban centers renowned for their architectural achievements, for example, Vijayanagara and Takshila.

In these articles, Hindu and non-Hindu identities are narrated through the monuments and cultural edifices of the nation-state. Predictably enough, Muslims (and less frequently Christians) appear only as iconoclasts, attempting to destroy and erase the magnificent monuments that Hindu hands had built. Little effort was made to include Islamic monuments as part of the architectural pantheon of “Indian” heritage. The motif of Hindus as a superior race of builders and architects emerges as a trope. The articles make clear that India’s cultural superiority is linked to a particular Hindu subjectivity marked by scientific temper, technological prowess, and aesthetic skill. In contrast, Islamic iconoclasm takes on a terrifying new relevance, in that the violence perpetrated on Hindu monuments is also violence perpetrated on the Hindu nation. The mutilation of one *corpus* (the monument) is also the mutilation of the body of the nation at large. For example, the sack of the Somanatha Temple by Mahmud of Ghazni in the eleventh century (an event that has in popular memory come to signify the violent introduction of Islam into the subcontinent) was explained thus in a 1955 “Holy Bharat” article:

It was on January 6, 1026, that Mahmud invested the fort of Somnath, which was in charge of King Mandalika. According to early Muslim chroniclers the defenders fought with unabated heroism. 50,000 Hindu warriors laid down their lives in defence of their beloved shrine before Mahmud captured the fort, entered the temple sanctified by centuries of devotion, broke the *linga* to pieces, looted the temple and burnt it to the ground ... But the shrine rose again and again and even the repetition of Mahmud’s vandalism by Allaud-din Khilji, and later by Aurangzeb’s generals could not extinguish its eternal life ... Somnath was the shrine beloved of Bharat ... An ancient race subconsciously felt that it was Somnath which connected it with the past and the present.¹⁵

Beyond the obvious implication that iconoclasm against the monument was iconoclasm against the modern nation (here transposed a millennium into the past), the imagination of trauma inflicted on the body of the nation implicates the *agent* of the trauma. Thus the essays of “Holy Bharat” are dedicated to historicizing (albeit inaccurately) the Islamic subject as the consummate iconoclast, whose wrath is directed against Hindu monuments, Hindu bodies

15 “Somnath: The Shrine Eternal”, in *Organiser*, 23 May 1955, p. 5.

(note the 50,000 Hindus who died whilst trying to save the temple), as well as against the “Hindu” nation. In this sense, the demands made by the Bajrang Dal and the VHP outside the Quwwat-ul-Islam in November 2000 were not simply about the reclaiming of Muslim space as Hindu space or of Muslim history as Hindu history; they were also the performative resurrection of Hindu trauma at the hands of a fictionalized enemy in the past. Through this performance an alleged medieval trauma was revived and relived as a specific experience of modernity with immediate currency. The social reproduction of the fictionalized enemy through sites such as Quwwat-ul-Islam is doubly important because the fictionalized enemy also becomes an historicized enemy, and the trauma of the past always threatens to repeat itself in the present.

In contrast to the predictable rhetoric of Islamic iconoclasm and Hindu trauma in reference to the building of the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque, the *Organiser*’s account of the Qutb Minar claims that the tower is an essentially Hindu structure that was violently appropriated by Muslim rulers. As early as 1947, the *Organiser* made the claim that the Qutb Minar was never built by Qutb-ud-din Aibak (the slave-general left behind by the Afghan sovereign Mahmud Ghori), but was commissioned and built by the Hindu ruler Prithvi Raj Chauhan for his daughter Bela.¹⁶ Once again, this is a claim that has been and continues to be reproduced in popular narratives regarding the Qutb Minar.¹⁷ Hindutva narratives have accorded pre-Islamic rulers such as Prithvi Raj Chauhan a quasi-mythical heroic status. He is often represented as the honorable Hindu sovereign whose defeat at the hands of twelfth-century Islamic sovereigns marks the definitive rupture in the history of Delhi and of India as a whole. The attribution of the magnificent Qutb tower to Prithvi Raj Chauhan is not just a reassertion of Delhi’s pre-Islamic Hindu past, but also the appropriation of one of the nation’s most prized and aesthetically celebrated structures as a Hindu monument. The article goes on to say that the Qutb Minar was originally called the Yamuna Stambh because it offered Bela a view of the river Yamuna, and that the surroundings of the Qutb Minar are in fact fragments of the palace and of this past Hindu geography. It further claims that the present condition of the minaret, particularly the inscription of the Qur’anic verses on its façade, is a result of the “disfigurement” that it suffered at the hands of Aibak.¹⁸

The rhetoric of Islamic iconoclasm and wanton destruction that appears so consistently in the *Organiser* finds a new iteration in the analysis of the Qutb Minar, where the Islamic calligraphy is seen as hiding an essentially Hindu core. Subsequently, in a full-page article published in the *Organiser* in 1954, the building of the Qutb Minar was attributed to another Hindu ruler,

16 *Organiser*, 31 July 1947, p. 10; for a more recent expression of this opinion see Lewis and Lewis, *Mehrauli*.

17 Examples in Godse, *Qutub Minar*.

18 *Organiser*, 31 July 1947, p. 10.

Visal Deva. Among the several reasons advanced by the author to support his claim that the minaret is a Hindu structure are its unorthodox position with respect to the mosque and the lack of epigraphical references crediting Muslim rulers with its conception and commencement. The author aimed to prove that while the minaret may have been enlarged or added to by Muslim rulers, it was not begun by them, and what appears to be an Islamic tower is simply an outer façade that was built around an existing Hindu minaret:

In 1199 AD ... the Muslims were too insecure to conceive, plan and execute a tower, the like of which the world has not seen ... To believe that the murdering, looting, slave monarchs – each conspiring against all – could have planned and executed it in the course of six years (1193–1199) is just not possible. Indeed there are quite a few inscriptions which have been maliciously defaced beyond legibility. These are unintelligible. It only stands to reason that these inscriptions gave the name of its pre-Muslim builder, the details of his victory and the date of its commencement.¹⁹

This opinion is also evoked in Hindi-language textbooks, in which it is maintained that the craft of externally ornamenting building façades was virtually unknown in countries outside Bharat (imagined with the geography of modern India), and therefore the first Turko-Islamic rulers of Delhi could not possibly have brought the skills required to build the Qutb Minar with them from Central Asia. Most historians concede that the Qutb Minar was in all probability built by indigenous craftsmen (whether Hindu or not) simply because medieval armies did not travel with sizeable numbers of craftspersons in tow and were thus dependent on local craftsmen to produce monuments for them.²⁰ What is at issue here, however, is not the acknowledgment of the indigenous labor that might have produced the Qutb Minar, but the appropriation of the monument itself as Hindu. Thus the narration of the history of the Qutb Minar as an essentially Hindu monument forcibly converted into an Islamic one differs in some respects from the conceptualization of the Quwwat-ul-Islam as built from the debris of Hindu temples. While in the latter narrative, the mosque is a site of Hindu humiliation that must be annulled in the present, the former enacts a counter-appropriation of an Islamic monument as Hindu.

While it may be tempting to analyze the claims made by Hindutva ideologues as completely separate and distinct from the colonial rhetoric of preservation, it is more revealing to note the discursive continuity between them. Indeed the rhetoric of radical Hindu nationalism not only reproduces colonial taxonomies of ethnic, religious, and cultural difference between Hindu and Muslim, it also replicates specific colonial knowledge regarding the distinct architectural traditions that set Hindus apart from Muslims. For

19 Kanwar Sain, "Who Built Qutab Minar?", *Organiser*, 15 August 1954, p. 46.

20 For example, see Flood (ed.), *Piety and Politics in the Early Indian Mosque*, p. xlvii.

example, in *The History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, James Fergusson offered this justification for his theory that the Quwwat-ul-Islam was constructed from the remains of a pre-existing structure with Hindu labor:

It may be necessary to explain that there would be no difficulty in taking down and rebuilding these erections because the joints of the pillars are all fitted with the precision that Hindu patience alone could give.²¹

Fergusson thus distinguishes the Muslim patron of the mosque from its Hindu builders, and explains its architectural technology as the product of particular ethnic virtues ("Hindu patience"). He continues with this line of reasoning:

The history of this mosque, as told in its construction, is as curious as anything about it. It seems that the Afghan conquerors had a tolerably distinct idea that pointed arches were the true form for architectural openings; but being without science sufficient to construct them, they left the Hindu architects and builders whom they employed to follow their own devices as to the mode of carrying out the form. The Hindus had up to this time never built arches – nor did they for centuries afterwards. Accordingly, they proceeded to make the pointed opening on the same principle upon which they built their domes. They carried them in horizontal courses as far as they could, and then closed them by long slabs meeting at the top ...²²

The building of the Quwwat-ul-Islam is thus explained as a product of Hindu labor servicing an "Islamic" vision that had its roots in Central Asia. More importantly, Fergusson takes care to note that this crucial point of contact between Hindu and Islamic cultures did not lead to a syncretistic culture for, as he states, the Hindus remained a culturally monolithic group for many centuries later.²³

While it is not my intention to trace a teleological connection between colonial rhetoric and Hindu nationalist ideology, it is important to recognize the echoes between these discourses and the self-conscious fashioning of Hindu and Islamic identities as mediated through the representations of this site. Scholars have argued that Hindutva modeled itself along the lines of several other European nationalisms, drawing particular inspiration from movements such as German Romanticism, on the basis of the clear correspondence between a particular ethnic identity and a larger national landscape.²⁴ Similarly, the representations of sites such as the Quwwat-ul-Islam, whether by colonialists or nationalists, served to shore up myths regarding an original, indigenous, and homogenous culture of Hindus who were disrupted by a foreign group of Muslim invaders. While their

21 Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, vol. 2, p. 117.

22 Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, vol. 2, p. 119.

23 Flood, "Signs of Violence".

24 Hansen, *The Saffron Wave*.

motivations were completely different, both colonial authorities and Hindu nationalists actively produced and maintained the myth of an ancient Hindu nation that had begun its swift deterioration with the advent of Islam in the twelfth century.

The Position of the Qutb Complex in the Landscape of Secular Nationalism

Not far from the Qutb Minar in Delhi is another medieval monument also under the protection of the ASI. Like the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque, Sultan Ghari shows clear signs that it was built with the fragments of non-Islamic structures. Unlike the Quwwat-ul-Islam, however, Sultan Ghari is poorly maintained and receives no visitors, nor has it been the site of any protests by Hindu nationalists claiming it as a Hindu temple. Why is this so? If the project of Hindutva claims the Qutb complex as Hindu space because it shows evidence of being constructed from non-Islamic *spolia*, should not monuments like the Sultan Ghari be subject to the same charges? I argue that it is precisely the position of the Qutb complex as a national symbol that makes it susceptible to this type of communal contestation. The nature of the protest that took place outside the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque in November 2000 makes clear that the reclaiming of the Qutb as an essentially Hindu monument was also the appropriation of a *national* icon for Hindutva.

Located less than five miles away from the Qutb Minar, Sultan Ghari was built in the late thirteenth century and is believed to be the tomb of the eldest son of the Sultanate ruler Altamash, although there is little textual proof to support this thesis. As in the Qutb complex, the architectural fragments in the Sultan Ghari clearly show figural ornamentation, such as sculptured animal forms, alongside rich Islamic calligraphic detail. Yet to describe the Sultan Ghari and its construction is to acknowledge that the monument is a bulky and sloppy arrangement of fragments from various other structures crowned by a corbelled dome. Unlike the Quwwat-ul-Islam complex, in which the *spolia* have been arranged in a systematic and easily readable whole, the fluted columns in the courtyard of the Sultan Ghari clash with its ill-proportioned dome, and its large marble cladding indicates an unsophisticated architectural composition. Simply put, even to a layperson, Sultan Ghari has limited aesthetic appeal. Sultan Ghari fails to impress the common visitor on precisely the same grounds that the Qutb succeeds: scale, symmetry, articulation of detail, the achievement of technology, and the inspiration of continuous building activity around it for several centuries after it was built. Although Sultan Ghari was declared an ancient monument early on by the ASI and continues to be recognized as such, today the structure languishes under an overgrowth of weeds and brambles that almost obscure the path

leading up to it. It receives no visitors except for the committed archaeologist or student of history and, as mentioned before, there have been no protests by Hindu nationalists at this site. Why have there been no attempts to recover Sultan Ghari in the same way as the Qutb complex? Why has a monument, so similar in makeup to the Qutb complex, languished unnoticed while the latter has occupied a central, albeit contested, position in the popular imagination of the nation's past? The answer has more to do with the modern lives of both monuments than with their medieval origins.

In order to understand the role of monuments in India's collective historical imagination, attention must be paid to the manner in which the national repertoire of monuments was deliberately produced at the moment of decolonization. In 1947, as India became independent and the subcontinent was partitioned, the government issued its first national stamps. One series was dedicated to the major archaeological sites of the new nation-state, and not surprisingly, the Qutb Minar was among them. Throughout its modern life, the import of the Qutb Minar (as a singular object divorced from its context of the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque) as a monument of national status has never been questioned. It features in school textbooks as an icon of India's architectural grandeur, is the venue for annual music and cultural festivals, and receives hundreds of domestic and international visitors every day. When it was designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in the 1970s, its importance as an aesthetic and historic icon was validated even beyond the boundaries of the nation-state. It is this aspect of the Qutb's modern life – its role as a definitive signifier of the nation-state – that has also created the furor about its origins. The historian Tapati Guha-Thakurta has argued that "historical monuments live their modern lives primarily as images. They survive and resonate in popular public memory as a body of readily available, reproducible imagery" and that the nineteenth-century project of producing monuments also meant that they had to be "rendered into an effective and replicable copy for a variety of official, scholarly, and public uses".²⁵ Building on this insight, we can say that the enduring continuity of a monument and indeed, the relative significance of its history, are based primarily on transmission. In the case of a historical monument that is also a national monument, multiple vehicles for this transmission present themselves, including postage stamps, school textbooks, the staging of national celebrations and commemorations, and the popular press. It is precisely the possibility of such transmission – the logic of visual reproduction in the public sphere – that legitimates the monument as a historical entity while also recreating the nation-state as equally historic.

If the Qutb Minar has been seized as a singular object of reverence by the postcolonial nation-state, the Quwwat-ul-Islam has been marked by contestation over its dual functions as mosque and national monument. My

25 Guha-Thakurta, "The Compulsions of Visual Representation", p. 110.

analysis of this aspect of the Qutb complex draws heavily upon the theoretical framework advanced by the historian Sunil Kumar, who has spoken of the discursive separation between national reactions to the Qutb Minar on the one hand and the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque on the other. Kumar speaks of the former as eliciting awe and respect from its viewers, noting that while its identity as an Islamic monument cannot be ignored, neither can its triumph as a technological and aesthetic feat. Meanwhile, the adjoining Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque remains much more problematic, since its identity is primarily a religious one, being both a mosque and a site evocative of Hindu trauma.²⁶ Most importantly, Kumar claims that the name of the mosque, Quwwat-ul-Islam, which is now commonly understood to mean the “*Might of Islam*” (and perceived as a reference to the triumph of Islam over an indigenous form of Hinduism) is in all probability the modern corruption of an older name that meant the “*Sanctuary of Islam*” or the “*Axis of Islam*”. In tracing this transformation of the mosque’s name, Kumar asserts that the contemporary historical image of the Quwwat-ul-Islam is the backwards projection of the trauma of a post-partition India mired in the conflict between Hindus and Muslims, rather than an accurate reflection of its medieval context.²⁷

The postcolonial contestations between religious space and the space of national heritage have become increasingly complex in recent decades. When the ASI took over the Qutb complex in the late nineteenth century, it was rarely used as a mosque and had no congregation to speak of (Fig. 10.4). Thus the ASI was able to establish its sole authority over the monument, since its aesthetic and cultural import far overshadowed its religious function. This remained true well into the late 1940s, as the location of the Quwwat-ul-Islam in the south of Delhi, where there was little residential development, meant that its identity as an archaeological site far outweighed its use as a mosque. The four decades following decolonization were marked by the rapid development of south Delhi, however, including the creation of several housing projects for refugees from Pakistan and the exponential growth of an urban population. By the mid-1970s, the Muslim community of Delhi began to assert its confessional right to enter and pray in the mosques of the city whether or not they were of archaeological significance. They saw the imposition of the entrance fees to these sites as unfair. At the time, the historic mosques subscribed to the general rules of the ASI, which included entrance fees and fixed opening times that did not always accord with Islamic observance. For example, while opening for the public at sunrise allowed many Muslims to enter in time for the first prayer of the day, closing promptly at sundown often did not allow completion of the mandated final prayer.

26 Kumar, “Qutb and Modern Memory”.

27 Kumar, “Qutb and Modern Memory”.



Fig. 10.4 Colonial supervisor and Indian molders working in the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque (c. 1872)

In the early 1990s, hundreds of Indian Muslims took to the streets of Delhi claiming their rights to enter historic mosques to pray when needed and to do so without having to pay entrance fees. These protests often involved the forcible entry of Muslim groups into ASI-protected monuments or skirmishes with ASI officials at the entrance gates.²⁸ Many historic mosques have since been opened for worship, yet there has been little change in the ASI's general attitude to these monuments. The signs posted by the ASI at the entrances to all historic monuments regarding the rules and regulations of the site do not acknowledge in any form that they may also be religious spaces of worship. They do not advertise whether or not Muslim visitors are subject to the standard entrance fee, although the ASI has agreed that it will not charge practicing Muslims entering mosques during prayer time.

In other words, the ASI remains ambivalent about its position on the religious value of the monuments and aloof from their functional nature, making their religious use an informal activity that takes place outside the building's regulated use as an historic monument. It is important to underline how the ambivalence of the ASI regarding the religious function of structures

28 For example, see "Devotees barge into protected mosque", in *The Times of India*, 4 March 1991; "Prayers at Safdarjung disallowed", in *The National Herald*, 5 March 1991; "Crowd breaks open Jami Masjid lock", in *The Indian Express*, 19 March 1991.

such as the Quwwat-ul-Islam has opened a space in which the members of the Hindu right can assert their own right to pray in mosques constructed with the *spolia* from Hindu temples. Indeed, during the protests of November 2005, the agitators demanded the right to worship in the Quwwat-ul-Islam on the grounds that the Muslim community had been allowed to do the same. I do not mean to suggest a causal connection between the stance of the ASI and the attacks by Hindu nationalists on the monument. I do, however, want to emphasize how the construction of the Qutb complex as a purely aesthetic object worthy of national pride has unraveled in the postcolonial nation-state, and to highlight the importance of this epistemic collapse and the moment in which it occurred.

Conclusion

Narratives of iconoclasm in India have revolved around Islamic iconoclasm in the medieval period (eleventh to fourteenth centuries), its presumed motivations vis-à-vis other religious communities (particularly Hindus), and the reproduction of religious clashes in the era of the modern nation-state. A common theme is the backwards projection of modern, and particularly postcolonial monolithic categories of religion and their presumed antagonisms into a medieval era. As a result, contemporary histories of iconoclasm in the South Asian context have been inclined to read all forms of spoliation, appropriation, reuse, and object mutilation via the trope of Islamic destruction motivated by religious desire.

While this essay cannot offer an exhaustive summary of the positions espoused by historians who seek to reassess Islamic iconoclasm in India, it is at least possible to acknowledge a few important new approaches. Romila Thapar argues against the use of iconoclasm as a single rubric to understand all appearances of *spolia*, noting that such a view replicates the colonial division of Indian history into an ancient Hindu civilization followed by a medieval (iconoclastic) Islamic period and then by British modernity.²⁹ This is a reading of Indian history framed by the legacy of colonial historians (most famously the thesis submitted by Henry Elliot in his *History of India as Told by its Own Historians*),³⁰ who represented the transition between Hindu and Muslim periods as an antagonistic rupture marked by various acts of iconoclasm, such as the desecration of the temple at Somanatha by Mahmud Ghazni in 1026 and the alleged destruction of Hindu temples by Mahmud of Ghori in 1192 in order to construct the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque in Delhi. By analyzing heretofore unread sources regarding the event, Thapar

29 Thapar, *Somanatha*.

30 Elliot and Dowson, *History of India*.

demonstrates that Ghazni may have had several motivations for the raid on the Somanatha temple, ranging from a desire for edification and inclusion in the more orthodox Islamic communities of Arabia, to the more pragmatic need for looted wealth to finance his campaigns in Central Asia. Thapar ascribes the privileging of the single motivation to subjugate and humiliate a perceived monolithic community of Hindus partly to colonial policy and partly to communal politics, which pitted Hindu and Muslim communities against one another following the partitioning of the subcontinent in 1947.³¹

In her work on architecture and society between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries in north-western India, art historian Alka Patel has similarly declined to read all examples of appropriation and reuse as symptomatic of iconoclasm.³² She rejects the conventional readings of the appropriation of Hindu architectural elements in buildings constructed for Islamic worship as a means of subjugating Hindu communities, readings that assume that Hindu dynasties were closely affiliated with particular deities, and therefore that the desecration of their temples was key to the assertion of Islamic imperial ambitions. While Patel is careful not to immediately discount the many indisputable propagandistic acts of vandalism and abuse of existing non-Islamic monuments, she considers other possible motivations for the reuse and appropriation of non-Islamic elements in new Islamic buildings. Proposing a "pragmatism" of reuse, she calls for a distinction between the careful salvaging of temple parts and their reorganization into a new structure, as in the Qutb complex, and the careless and indiscriminate destruction that is associated with iconoclasm. In addition, she notes that the salvaging of building materials from dilapidated or abandoned buildings (a common condition in regions of the subcontinent where seismic activity was very high) may have been simply a strategy of the new Islamic patrons to economize on resources.³³

My purpose in this essay has been not to investigate the motivations of the agents of specific acts of iconoclasm, but to examine the reassertion of iconoclastic events of the medieval period in the modern context of South Asia. The contested origins of the Qutb complex have endured into the contemporary moment as one of the many mythologies of the modern nation, and they have also been appropriated by different ideological camps in order to further their particular hegemonic strategies. Understood as a phenomenon of the medieval or ancient world, iconoclasm is interpreted through the historical specificities of periods in the past. Indeed, when it occurs in modern space and time, iconoclasm is treated as an anachronistic aberration.³⁴ But if we expand the definition of iconoclasm beyond the physical desecration and vandalism of cultural objects of significance to include acts that attempt the

31 Thapar, *Somanatha*.

32 Patel, *Building Communities in Gujarât*.

33 Patel, *Building Communities in Gujarât*.

34 Flood, "Between Cult and Culture".

erasure of one set of cultural meanings in order to replace it with another set of cultural identities, we can understand iconoclasm as an essential and ubiquitous strategy of modernity, of use to both colonial and nationalist apparatuses of power.

Today, the Qutb complex still stands in its entirety, unchanged in physical form and receiving more and more visitors with every passing day. An aggressive bureaucracy of preservation (itself a legacy of colonialism) has ensured the safety of the Qutb complex as an object of cultural, aesthetic, and national merit for posterity. However, the stability of the Qutb as *objet d'art* belies the bitter contestations surrounding its origins, its cultural identity, and its rightful place in the genealogy of the modern Indian nation-state. As competing narratives jostle for supremacy in the representation of the monument as icon of the nation's hoary past, as symbol of Islamic triumph or site of Hindu trauma, the Qutb complex remains a site of modern iconoclasm as much as it may – or may not – have been the site of medieval iconoclasm.

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***Spolia* in Contemporary Architecture: Searching for Ornament and Place**

Hans-Rudolf Meier

Contemporary architecture – that is, buildings of the last twenty or thirty years – shows an increasing interest in the reuse of architectural pieces. *Spolia* are once again a theme of practicing architects, and once aware of this, one finds an astonishing array of new examples. This phenomenon may be explained, on the one hand, by a search for new forms of ornament, and on the other hand, by a new interest in place. Although various tendencies in contemporary architecture betray a new interest in ornament, the modernist polemic against ornament continues to exercise an influence. In this sense, *spolia* present a welcome opportunity to exploit a wealth of formal accents without having to develop one's own decorative vocabulary. This can be seen in the quotidian example of a strictly functional extension to a Caritas building in Dresden, in which the door is an historical *spolium* and also the only element that relieves the strict right angles of the architecture (Fig. 11.1).

The following essay is concerned with such cases of the reuse of old elements in routine commissions of contemporary architecture, for it is precisely in such projects that the phenomenon is something new for modernism. I am not concerned here with the hybrids of *spolia* and imitation that Umberto Eco, taking the example of William Randolph Hearst's castle in San Simeón, vividly described as "enchanted castles". In such desperate desire for the historicizing quasi-authentic, Eco sees "a neurotic reaction to the vacuum of memories; the Absolute Fake is the offspring of the unhappy awareness of a present without death."¹

1 Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality*, pp. 30–31.



Fig. 11.1 Dresden, Caritas Building Görlitzer Street, annex (2003)

Bricolage and Recycling

Let us remain in California and begin with an example from the prehistory of postmodernism. In 1962, the architect Charles W. Moore built a small, cubic house in Orinda. The kernel of the design is two skylights in the form of baldachins, each borne by four 11-ft-high wooden columns. Moore bought the columns for two dollars apiece from a condemned house in San Francisco. In

his statements regarding this early work, he always emphasizes the bargain acquisition of these *spolia* and his minimal budget: "They are going to be the basis for this incredibly cheap and incredibly elegant establishment."² When the house is considered in the context of Moore's entire *oeuvre*, however, it becomes clear that the mere price of the columns could not have led accidentally to the design. For the man who would go on to design the Piazza d'Italia in New Orleans, the playful treatment of the serious motif of the four-columned baldachin and the reuse of old building elements in a formal and material break with the conventions of modernity must have been essential parts of the original idea. Realized with *spolia*, the classical motif becomes the kernel of an unorthodox spatial conception.

We are not concerned here with the place of the Orinda house in Moore's life work; rather, this early example serves to represent an increasingly significant tendency in recent decades towards the reuse of old building materials for economic and often also aesthetic reasons. In Moore's house, the origin of the *spolia* has no significance. There was no attempt to establish any sort of special connection between their origin and their present location. In terms of architectural theory, such practice is rooted in the concept of *bricolage*. The *spolium* does not serve to restage the past, but is one component of a work cobbled together from various found materials, sometimes with the explicit intention to overturn normative aesthetic conceptions. More recently, this type of reuse has been carried out in the name of an ecologically grounded conservation of resources and/or in opposition to the monotony of contemporary materials and forms. Thus the appreciation of *spolia* can be economically and ecologically determined, but also aesthetically motivated. The practice has been institutionalized in markets and warehouses for old architectural pieces that are supplied by the dismemberment of old buildings, usually buildings slated for demolition.³ Although this phenomenon has gained significance with postmodernism and a new ecological awareness, it is in no sense new.⁴ In material-poor premodern eras, the reuse of building elements was more the rule than the exception, at least in everyday architecture. There are also examples of a commercialized trade in *spolia* in late Historicism, such as the advertisement in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* of 14 July 1900 touting a "treasure trove" "consisting of six portals, seventy window frames, vases,

2 Moore in a letter of February 1961: Keim, *An Architectural Life*, p. 167; see also Moore, *Buildings and Projects 1949–1986*, p. 16 and cat. no. 2.

3 Moore already took his columns from a "torn-down warehouse"; see the letter cited above, n. 2. Commercial trade in historical building materials has a longer history in the US and in France than in Germany, where a merchant's association for historical building supplies was founded only in 1992.

4 To this might be added the greater ease of distribution through the internet. The following sites are more or less arbitrarily chosen examples: www.secondchanceinc.org, www.architecturalsalvagenews.com, www.citysalvage.com, www.salvagelady.com (last accessed: 30 December 2009).

figures, etc.” suitable for the “construction of a magnificent building of the rarest splendor, such as a museum, palace, hotel, bank, or department store”.⁵ These were parts of the former Böttingerhaus in Bamberg, which a Munich Councillor of Commerce bought and used to build the “Bamberger Haus” in his home city’s Luitpoldpark, today used as a coffee house.

Old and New

The Swiss architect Rudolf Olgiati (1910–95), whose buildings in Grisons made him one of the pioneers of a specifically alpine post-War modernism, deliberately incorporated old elements into his buildings years before the new use of old architectural elements experienced a commercial renaissance with the establishment of salvage markets. Olgiati amassed hundreds of pieces and objects from demolition and restoration sites, as well as from flea markets, and carefully archived them. For him, as he explicitly stated, it was not a question of collecting; rather, he “stored” the objects “in order to keep them safe through difficult times”.⁶ He reused a number of these pieces in his residential projects, in which, for example, he would incorporate the specific dimensions of old doors into the earliest stage of his design. What function did these *spolia* serve? For Olgiati, they appear to have embodied a quality of craft and form, as well as a quality of space that had become scarce in the “difficult times” of the present era.⁷ Their reuse in his own projects thus stakes a claim, both for themselves and for his own creations, to have achieved an adequate level of quality despite present circumstances. Here the old represents a sort of standard or yardstick for the new.⁸ In light of Olgiati’s statements, the *spolia* seem to represent an attempt to take up a tradition and to bridge with ordinary reuse the rupture of modernism, which was itself made visible by the presence of the old in the new.

The old house doors that were sometimes reused in the prefabricated buildings (*Plattenbauten*) that followed urban clearance in the city centers of the late GDR were also meant to at least partially mitigate the rupture

5 Bartetzko, *Verbaute Geschichte*, p. 31; Freise-Wonka, *Ignaz Tobias Böttinger (1675–1730)*, p. 60.

6 “... magazinierte, ... um die Gegenstände über schlechte Zeiten hinwegzuretten”, cited after Riederer, *Rudolf Olgiati*, p. 81; Tschanz, “Regionalismus als Utopie”, p. 432.

7 See also his pamphlet *Rudolf Olgiati*, in which he protests against the destroyers of the Heimat, defining Heimat as the “method of building that was, until 1880, the every-day, normal architecture” (p. 4).

8 The architects of the housing block at the Berlin Museum (see below) explicitly state that the *spolia* they used “also became standards”: quoted by Peter Rumpf, “... im Scheinwerferlicht der Internationalen Bauausstellung. Zum Wohnhaus Lindenstraße 15–17 in Berlin, Architekten Werner Kreis, Ulrich Schaad und Peter Schaad, London und Zürich”, *Archithese* 16/1 (1986), p. 26.

between old and new.⁹ If city-specific modifications to the prefabricated types were made in order to render the industrial apartment buildings compatible with the historical city centers, then the *spolia* doors were likewise meant to establish a material connection to the historical city and simultaneously to temper the monotony of even the modified public housing. Like the examples cited above under “*Bricolage* and Recycling”, this use of *spolia* did not primarily aim to establish a link to a specific place. Instead, it posits a more generic connection to the past and to tradition, which are perceived as fundamentally positive qualities precisely in the recognition of their loss. The appreciative preservation and reuse of such mementos as a testament to a deeply rooted tradition situates and stabilizes the new in place and time. By giving it an individual stamp, the *spolia* serve to anchor the new building, even if their origin is neither known nor decisive, as with the house doors of the prefabricated apartment buildings.

The situation is different with Olgiati, in whose work the question of place served as a leitmotif, and who thus also explicitly thematized the origin of the *spolia*. In an autobiographical note, he explained his systematic collecting with the explicit intention “to bring everything back to its place of origin”.¹⁰

Memoria loci

Olgiati leads us to the frequent cases of *spolia* use, especially during and after postmodernism, that posit a more concrete connection to place. The attempt to establish an objective connection to the site and its history by means of *spolia* has become nearly ubiquitous, although the practices employed to this end are admittedly diverse. In some cases, the presence of *spolia* may be seen as an attempt to temper the rupture created by the new building itself. Already in the 1980s, Dieter Batetzko, citing Helene Rahms, criticized such practices as token gestures:

What is questionable about this *spolia* architecture is that it can be used as a justification or compensation for brutal and reckless encroachments on the organic unity of the city.¹¹

9 Schleiff, “Stadtreparatur in den neuen Bundesländern”, esp. p. 132.

10 “alles wieder an den Ursprungsort zurückzubringen”: Olgiati, *Rudolf Olgiati*, p. 40.

11 “Fragwürdig an dieser Spolienarchitektur ist, ... dass sie ... zur Rechtfertigung oder als Trost für brutale und leichtfertige Eingriffe in den Gesamtorganismus der Stadt benutzt werden kann”: Batetzko, *Verbauter Geschichte*, p. 85, citing from Helene Rahms, “Die synthetische Altstadt. Die Rettungsversuche für alte Bauten in Aachen, Lüttich und Maastricht”, *Deutsche Kunst und Denkmalpflege*, 1981 no. 1, p. 191.



Fig. 11.2 Braunschweig, “Schloss-Arkaden” with *spolia* from the Ducal Palace (2007).

Bartetzko’s criticism was directed not least at city-center department stores, even if he conceded that the 1984 Kaufhof in Würzburg, with its mixture of architecture designed to adapt to the historical surroundings (*Anpassungsarchitektur*) and built-in fragments of walls, spoliated windows and doors, was at least a serious attempt to integrate the fragments of the old city.¹² Since then a much more extensive and aggressive use of *spolia* in the new generation of German city-center shopping malls has become one of the very conditions of their acceptability. The Braunschweig “Schloss-Arkaden”, in which *spolia* were employed to reconstruct the façade of the old Stadtschloss in front of the outsized mall, is only the best-known example (Fig. 11.2).¹³ In comparison with other cases, the Braunschweig Palace mall has the advantage that historical buildings did not have to be demolished in order to produce the *spolia*. Following a very slim majority decision of the Braunschweig municipal council, in 1960 the War-damaged remains of the 1844 Stadtschloss had been carried off and the cleared area, now called the “Schlosspark”, was not rebuilt. Accordingly the attempt was made to sell the “Schloss-Arkaden” project under the rubric of “urban repair”.¹⁴

12 Bartetzko, *Verbaute Geschichte*, pp. 186–9.

13 On this, see Thumm, “Die Macht der Bilder”.

14 For a critical view, see Meier, “Stadtreparatur und Denkmalpflege”.

On the other hand, in Hamlin, famed as the “Pied Piper’s town”, an entire quarter of the historical old city that had been spared by the war was sacrificed to the so-called “Stadtgalerie”.¹⁵ The façade of the former county building was preserved and integrated into the new structure as *in situ spolia*. Its familiar Baroque forms are meant to lend the new building the imprimatur of tradition and thus to bolster the acceptance of the new, disproportionately large mall. The *spolia* are meant to relieve the shock of the new of this radically rescaled idea of space by evoking a more familiar spatiality, at least in memory.

In these examples, *spolia* were redeployed *in situ* and even in the context of their original use, at least in terms of the structural place of the façade. Since entire façades were involved, they even blur the distinction between the use of *spolia* and reconstruction. The most significant such case, broadcast around the world by the media, was the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche in Dresden, which had the aim of returning at least the visible reused elements exactly to their original positions. In this case, the procedure should be seen as an attempt to obliterate or suppress the rupture as well as the memory of how the rupture occurred, at least visually.¹⁶

If the reconstructionist use of *spolia* is concerned with the restaging of old, familiar, or remembered public squares and urban spaces, at the other end of the spectrum is deconstruction. A vivid example of the latter is the expansion of the city hall of Utrecht realized between 1997 and 2001 by Enric Miralles and Benedetta Tagliabue.¹⁷ Additions made to the historicizing city hall in 1932 were torn down and some of the architectural elements thus produced were integrated into the façade of a new expansion in a play of deconstruction and manneristic allusion (Fig. 11.3). The result is formally unusual, to say the least, and testifies to an unorthodox conception of history. That reference to history was in fact part of the design concept is evident in the interior of the old building, where chunks of plaster were knocked off as if to “expose history” – that is, to break up the unifying approach of historicism, which aims to level difference, and to lay bare the historical multi-layeredness of the heterogeneous building complex.

However different the practices of reconstruction and deconstruction may be, *spolia* still function in both as real structural elements of the new building. In recent times, this is virtually the rule. Still in the mid-1980s, however, in the context of the Berlin International Architectural Exhibit IBA, Werner Kreis and Peter and Ulrich Schaad set single architectural *spolia* into recesses in the rusticated socle of the clinker-brick façade of the front section of the Wohnpark at the Berlin Museum (Fig. 11.4). The architects describe

15 Thumm, “Die Macht der Bilder”, p. 246; for further examples, see Brune (ed.), *Angriff auf die City*.

16 On this, see Meier, “Paradigma oder Büchse der Pandora?”.

17 “Renovations to Utrecht Town Hall”, in Miralles and Tagliabue, *Enric Miralles / Benedetta Tagliabue*, pp. 64–79; Todaro, “Spolia nel progetto contemporaneo”.



Fig. 11.3 Utrecht, City Hall, new wing with *spolia* from a former annex (2001).

the function of the *spolia* as “mementos of the more recent past – the new architecture contains the old, the new Berlin incorporates remains of the ruined city”, drawing a connection to Karl Friedrich Schinkel’s use of *spolia* in Schloss Glienicke (Berlin, 1825).¹⁸ Like the antique fragments that Schinkel built into the façade of the Schloss and the Kavaliersflügel according to purely

¹⁸ Kreis, Schaad and Schaad, “Double-faced building”, p. 192. See also n. 8 above.



Fig. 11.4 Berlin, Wohnpark Lindenstraße, entrance building (1986)

decorative criteria, the *spolia* at the Wohnpark appear unconnected to the Lindenstraße and incoherent. The reused pieces are not building materials but objects displayed as if in a vitrine. In fact, as the architects write, they are also artifacts of personal memory, “of having dug out the fragments with our own hands from an overgrown wasteland of oblivion”.¹⁹ The *spolia* are therefore found objects that connect the new architecture with the old city only in the most generic sense. They do not evoke any concrete architectural or spatial continuity (which, as is obvious in Utrecht, can also embrace ruptures).

Today, it is more common to seek direct local connections, which are expressed by the architectonic (and not museal) incorporation of reused elements. Thus *spolia* are often components of contextual building in historical city centers.²⁰ The Frankfurt architect Christoph Mäckler addresses this issue directly: *spolia* “must be incorporated, not as decorative elements, but as

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Similarly Valena, *Beziehungen*.

pieces that are also functional. When you position such a capital or console or whatever other piece it might be somewhere, you cannot put it under glass."²¹ Mäckler sets forth five principles that, in his opinion, are necessary to an appropriate engagement with a site. The fourth is that "preserved parts of the original façade, the so-called *spolia*, be reintroduced and relate something of the history of the place."²² The Frankfurt Office of City Planning has taken up this proposal and established a website with the goal of taking stock of all the *spolia* in the old city – not least so they can be taken into consideration in future planning for "urban repair".²³

Thus one might identify the most recent trend in the increasing number of cases in which *spolia* are no longer meant to stage the rupture between old and new, but – in Mäckler's sense and in the wake of the "holistic turn" recently registered by Wolfgang Pehnt²⁴ – their use is self-evidently contextual. Among the most recent examples is the residential project *Klostergarten* in the *Lehel* district of Munich by the architects Hild und K, in which numerous Neo-Romanesque round-arched windows from the ground floor of the previous structure have been integrated into the new building's garden façade.²⁵ Admittedly the large biforia, with their exposed stone, are immediately recognizable as additions to the modern plaster façade, but at the same time they also play a very significant role in determining the structure and the character of the whole (Fig. 11.5). They give the impression of having always been there, as if the façade around them had merely been renovated. The self-evidently contextual use of *spolia* rarely achieves such an impression of the continuity of place.

The modern *spolia* mentioned here are predominantly windows and doors. This is not surprising, given that window- and door-frames are often the only worked-stone elements of a building. Yet this is probably not the only reason for the striking frequency with which the doors and portals of a demolished building are carried over into the new building that replaces it. The practice is not limited to modernity, but can be traced back to the very beginnings of *spolia* architecture. Stephan Albrecht has already developed this observation

21 "müssen eingebaut werden, nicht als dekorative Elemente, sondern als Teile, die auch benutzt werden. Wenn Sie so ein Kapitell irgendwohin setzen, so eine kleine Knacke oder was auch immer, können Sie die nicht unter Glas tun": "Christoph Mäckler: 'Flachdach ist spießig'", interview in *Taz Mag*, 446 (22/23 April 2006), p. II.

22 "dass erhaltene originale Fassadenteile, die so genannten Spolien, wieder eingebracht werden und etwas von der Geschichte des Ortes erzählen": *ibid.*

23 <http://www.frankfurter-spolien.de> (last accessed: 30 December 2009).

24 Pehnt, "Ein Ende der Wundpflege?", online version at: <http://schlossdebatte.de/?p=301> (last accessed: 5 July 2009).

25 "Spolien im Lehel. Wohnanlage in München fertig": http://www.baunetz.de/meldungen/Meldungen-Wohnanlage_in_Muenchen_fertig_802601.html (last accessed: 16 July 2009).



Fig. 11.5 Munich, "Klostergarten Lehel" (2009)

in the medieval context.²⁶ Albrecht has established that, while the motives for reuse on portals may vary, in many cases old portals recalled the founding era and its privileges and so functioned as "documents in stone". Although this aspect may be of little significance today, the portal still demands the attention of the visitor as a passageway. It is a site of entry and exit, of transition, and is therefore especially suited to staging the transitory, and with it the shift and the play between old and new.²⁷

²⁶ Albrecht, "Portale als Spolien, Spolien als Portale".

²⁷ On this, see Engelmann and Meier, "Passagen ... die in ihr vergangenes Dasein führen".

Conclusion

The goal of this essay has not been to provide even a roughly comprehensive overview of *spolia* in the architecture of the last few decades.²⁸ My observations may be pertinent to the situation in Europe; whether they are relevant also for other parts of the world must be examined. It is interesting that in Asia, for instance, *spolia* do not appear to have any importance in contemporary architecture; they seem to be linked with European-influenced concepts of history. For the European sphere, my central thesis is that in the architecture of the recent past, there is increasingly a reference to place through the reuse of architectural fragments. No linear development is implied; the practices described here on the basis of various examples exist simultaneously and beside one another. Nevertheless, a certain tendency appears clear to me. In the latest architecture, with contextual building and the retro-architecture known as the “new historicism”, the staging of the difference between old and new by means of the “art of the joint” has given way to actual restagings of the historical by means of *spolia*. With regard to the spatial dimension, it seems significant that either the origin of the *spolia* plays no role at all (as in recycling and the trade in architectural fragments), or the *spolia* are reused at their original site, in order to create some sort of relationship between the previous building and the new one. It is no accident that the new interest in *spolia* arose simultaneously with a new interest in place. The book on the *genius loci* by architectural theorist Christian Norberg-Schulz, currently attracting much attention in architectural circles, is more a symptom than a cause of this phenomenon.²⁹ On the other hand, there are hardly any new buildings in which *spolia* are meant to invoke the “spirit”, image, or significance of their place of origin on a new site, as still happened in the first half of the twentieth century, notably with the inclusion of real medieval cloisters in The Cloisters of the Metropolitan Museum in New York.³⁰ An exception would be the reuse of the entire façade of the Palazzo di Lorenzo in Francesco Venezia’s new museum in Gibellina Nuova. Destroyed by an earthquake in 1968, the Sicilian town of Gibellina was rebuilt at a distance of 18 kilometers from its original site. As a reminder of the old city, Venezia removed the façade of the neo-classical palazzo, which had been left intact by the earthquake, to his museum dedicated to the history of the place. In contrast to the shopping malls discussed above that also reused entire façades, the spoliated front of

28 Thus the important subject of *spolia* in the context of the memory of World War II has not been addressed. On this, see the 2009 dissertation by Biagia Bongiorno on the use of *spolia* in the twentieth century, taking the example of Berlin, soon to be published; for now: Biagia Bongiorno, “Spolien im 20. Jahrhundert. Das Jüdische Gemeindehaus in Berlin”, *Das Münster* 60/1 (2007), pp. 52–6.

29 Norberg-Schulz, *Genius loci*; see also Valena, *Beziehungen*, and most recently Wolfrum and Nerdinger (eds), *Multiple City*, pp. 132–50.

30 Kletke, *Cloister of St-Guilhem-le-Désert*.

the palazzo is not intended to establish a familiar urban image in the entirely newly planned site of Gibellina Nuova – nor could it. For this reason, it is built not onto the exterior but in the museum's interior courtyard. The ruins of the original city have been buried under a thick layer of cement fashioned by Alberto Burri, so that the *spolia* are among the only remains of the destroyed city still visible. Thus they too, like most *spolia* in recent architecture, are meant to testify to a local continuity, even if the locale – the town of Gibellina – now lies elsewhere.³¹

Translated from the German by Benjamin Anderson

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31 Venezia, "Transfer und Transformation"; Ortelli, "Architettura di muri".

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Some Thoughts About the Significance of Postmodern Appropriation Art

Donald Kuspit

Mr. el-Masri said the discovery suggested to experts that this could have been the site of a temple complex in the reign of Ramses, who ordered more buildings and colossal statues than any other pharaoh did. On the other hand, he added, Ramses is known to have carved his name on statues of previous pharaohs or to have reshaped them.

New York Times, December 17, 1991

Was what Ramses did, when he carved his name on the statues of previous pharaohs, an act of appropriation or an act of despoilment? Was he being creative when he had the statues of previous pharaohs reshaped, or had he run out of new ideas for statues of pharaohs? Or was he simply following tradition – the rules governing the representation of pharaohs – if also giving it a little personal twist? The answer is not clear. If appropriation means “to make one’s own” (from the Latin *ap-proprius*), then Ramses made the statues of his predecessors his own. But at what cost? Carving his name in place of theirs or having their statues reshaped so that they became his, Ramses in effect wiped them off the map of Egyptian history. He was not simply their successor, but greater than they were: replacing their names and reshaping their statues was a kind of spoiler’s art.

It was certainly not imaginative, at least not in the modern sense: it didn’t result in anything seriously new. Without a “vigorous imagination”, Baudelaire wrote in 1859, there is no convincing art. Imagination “decomposes all creation, and with the raw materials accumulated and disposed in accordance with rules whose origins one cannot find save in the furthest depths of the

soul, it creates a new world, it produces the sensation of newness.”¹ This is the credo of modernism: “the furthest depths of the soul” is the unconscious, and in modernity the unconscious is the artist’s muse, as Redon suggested when he said the artist must “wait upon the unconscious” for inspiration. The unconscious is imaginative, and to be imaginative, in the modern sense, is to create a new world of sensation, and of emotion, as Baudelaire also said – not ratify an old world, produce the same old sensations, have the same old emotions. By this standard, Ramses’s tinkering with the statues of his predecessors can hardly be regarded as imaginative. Nothing seriously new came out of it: it was the same old ruler with another name – the name a sort of Emperor’s New Clothing on the same old authoritarian power. Names come and go, but rulers remain rulers. Ramses didn’t change the rules that governed the making of statues, only “adjusted” their appearance to suit his vanity, a superficial change that made no great difference in the meaning of the statue. Artistically speaking, the “revised” statue was a failure of imagination – creative nerve – or, at best, a product of the blind obedience to tradition that signals decadence, that is, sterility and stagnation.

Postmodern appropriation art suggests a similar decadence, a similar loss of creative imagination, a similar submission – capitulation – to tradition: the tradition of the new, as Harold Rosenberg called it, following Baudelaire’s lead. For Baudelaire, it was born in mid-nineteenth-century Paris; for Rosenberg, it grew up in early twentieth-century Paris – by 1914 all the modernist cards were on the table in Paris, he wrote – and in post-World War II New York virtually every modernist hand of art was imaginatively played, bringing the tradition of the new to climactic ripeness while suggesting that it was over. Indeed, as the historian Daniel Bell said, modernism had exhausted its creative possibilities in the process of becoming dominant. By the end of the 1960s, it had become another mainstream academicism. Making it new, which was the task of modernism, as the poet Ezra Pound said, had become standard operating procedure. Modernism became habitual and likeable, and rewarded with commercial success and art historical recognition. It had not only arrived, but been institutionalized. It began attacking “museum art”, as Clement Greenberg contemptuously called it, but it had become museum art.

Its novelty was celebrated above all else, leading to the emergence of art whose only claim to fame was its novelty – what Greenberg called “Novelty Art”, a corruption of modern art that was the final stage in its decadence. Novelty art was a perpetual motion machine for producing the new, as though it was an aesthetic end in itself, and inherently valuable, and as such all that art needed to have credibility, significance, success. Novelty Art showed that newness had come to be prized for its own sake in modernity – that newness had become the gist of modernity – that the pursuit of novelty

1 Baudelaire, “The Salon of 1859”, pp. 234–5.

was the one constant of modernity. Modern art had to climax in Novelty Art, for to be modern had come to mean to be novel, suggesting that Novelty Art was modern art perfected: a distillation – and reification – of the newness in modern art, the newness that made art modern, the newness that was its essence. From the start, what made modern art distinctive – noticeable, “recognizable” – was its novelty, which is why it was fated to dead-end in novelty, especially because novelty had become synonymous with originality.

Greenberg thought the museum of the new was becoming full of vacuous novelties – dubious art. Novelty Art was an attempt to save modern art from the vacuous redundancy of what he called “Alexandrianism” – Alexandrian art being a hollow copy of Greek originals, and as such inauthentic by their standard – by giving it a cosmetic make-over. It was a new look on an old brand of art. But that’s what Alexandrianism involves, suggesting that Novelty Art was a paradoxical form of Alexandrian art – novelty being a gloss on a copy, an “artistic” way of covering up the fact that something old is being copied and appropriated, and that copying is not imaginative transformation and as such not creative. It is exactly what Ramses did with the old statues, suggesting that he was an early Alexandrian Novelty Artist. Novelty Art is the beginning of postmodern art, and postmodern art is Alexandrian in principle and practice.

Looking new means looking good, and being taken seriously, at least as long as the art continues to seem new. Not for very long, it seems, considering the constant hunger for the new in modernity, leading to the constant turnover of the new – the ceaseless production of art novelties that barely satisfies the jaded taste for the new. But art has to be “re-newed” by being “novelized” because it is no longer taken seriously, and if not dismissed as bad put in its historical place, and thus almost out of imaginative reach, suggesting that it can only rarely – for the so-called happy few – become what the philosopher John Dewey famously called “*an* experience”. It seems that the more art is historically objectified, and the more intellectually conscious of it we become, the less unconscious effect it has, the more muted its emotional impact, suggesting that it has become subjectively insignificant, less of a subjective resource and more a social staple. As it gains historical authority, even elevated to the historical heights, it seems more impersonally given, however much it may be worshipped as an idol of history. All-too-human subject and historical art object are at odds; there can be no deep reciprocity – dialectical intimacy – between them.

In Alexandrian modernism, the new look became the whole “historical” substance of art, confirming its shallowness – its loss of unconscious depth, of contact with what the psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott called “primary creativity”. Unable to make contact with the unconscious as the modernists were able to do, and so unable to be imaginative and make serious art, let alone make art new, the postmodernists envied the modernist past,

appropriating its creative achievements, which is what Sherrie Levine did when she added her signature to the works of various modernist artists. It was hardly a creative, imaginative act, indeed, it signaled a complete lack of creativity and imagination. Envy feels persecuted by what it envies, as the psychoanalyst Melanie Klein says, and defensively destroys it, as she adds, and Levine destroyed the modernists by appropriating and persecuting them with her envy. Appropriation is uncreative, unimaginative, paranoid, and destructive, and with that stupid and unfeeling: appropriation is an act of brutal aggrandizement indicating a complete failure of empathic understanding. Indeed, envious aggrandizement is symptomatic of the lack of capacity for attuned insight – the insight that comes from attunement.

Levine in effect soul-murdered modernist art, to use Freud's term, by appropriating its appearance without appreciating its substance. She appropriated its look without fathoming the mystery of its creativity, its resourceful unconscious. She stuck to its surface because she was incapable of swimming in its depths. All she was conscious of was its look, which no longer seemed uncanny – fraught with unconscious import – but only famous: it was that fame she really envied. Envious appropriation art is a sort of *reductio ad absurdum* of what Rosenberg called "signature painting" – now simplistically the postmodernist's signature added to a modernist work of her choosing, for whatever theoretical and ideological reasons. The performance artist Allan Kaprow calls postmodern art "post-art", and indeed appropriation art is a sort of grandstanding performance or quasi-theatrical "happening", to refer to Kaprow's neo-Dadaist "events" – even if Levine's performance consists only in adding the punctuation mark of her signature to the appropriated work, turning it into Novelty Art.

Levine was supposedly "proving" that there was no such thing as authorship and originality, only unoriginal, endless copying – an *au courant* art-theoretical idea derived from Roland Barthes's notion of the death of the author, that is, the collapse of authorial authority (the author doesn't have the last word about the work, nor for that matter the first word), and from Jacques Derrida's complementary view that the work is never original and the author's own, but always and inevitably an "endless linked series [of] supplementary mediations" that pre-exist it, and thus never the product of "originary perception" (which doesn't exist). There was also a feminist streak to the "thinking" behind Levine's appropriations (by way of mechanical reproduction of a mechanical reproduction of the nominally "original", mechanical reproduction being a basic mode of appropriation): they are all of works by male artists. Levine was not only denying their originality and uniqueness by matter-of-factly reproducing them and presenting them under the "erasure" of her own name, but simultaneously appropriating and negating the artist's maleness – that is, implying that she's as good as any male artist even as she despises maleness (thus the many contradictory uses

of appropriation). And of course simultaneously appropriating and negating his art historical importance, and his privileged position in the art world – considering the fact that there are more exhibitions by male than female artists, as the Guerrilla Girls have documented. Certainly appropriation was her way of calling attention to herself – establishing her name and fame (her notorious “brand” of “conceptual” art).

Overriding and overwriting the male artist’s signature with her female artist’s signature, she at once displaces and replaces him, even though her identity remains entirely “nominal”, not only because it is almost entirely a matter of her name – her significance resides largely in her signature – but because it depends, with paradoxical perversity, on the “big-name” male artist she appropriates. If appropriation is a matter of quotation, as has been argued, then the quoted, appropriated image looms larger than its theoretical and political recontextualization – the “re-vision” and “re-framing” of its meaning (suggesting that it has no “original meaning”) – by way of Levine’s signature, which is, after all, only a small, visually insignificant part of the work, however symbolic of her supposedly daring intellect, that is, her “postmodern” ideas, not to say theoretically and politically correct interpretation of modernist works. Her signature may look marginal, but after all, it is central, indeed, from a “conceptual” point of view, more central than the work, which now becomes marginal to the “mind” the signature stands for. The work becomes an illustration of her ideas, and as such an incidental phenomenon, of secondary consequence. Thus “pure mind” before artistic matter – art following the lead of and totally dependent on philosophy, as some *soi-disant* conceptual artists have said – however small and limited the mind and big and imposing the art, not just materially but expressively.

An odd consequence of this approach to art is that the philosophy becomes a kind of narrow-minded procrustean bed into which the art must fit – there is no tolerance for art that doesn’t conform. Just as authoritarian Marxists “re-educate” non-conforming bourgeois into conforming proletarians, so Levine “re-educates” non-conformist modernists into conformist postmodernists. She is not a “free thinker” but a doctrinaire ideologue, dogmatically forcing modernist art into the ideological straitjacket of her theoretically and politically self-righteous belief system. Postmodern appropriation involves the re-education – under the guise of rethinking or reconceptualizing – of modern art: it does not accept it on its own “unconscious”, imaginative terms, let alone believe in unconscious imagination. Art for it is a social construction that can be deconstructed into its contradictions and reconstructed according to an unself-contradictory whole – a utopian ideal. But however much Levine postmodernizes modernism into unrecognizability, the art-historical importance and meaningfulness of her appropriation depends above all on the art-historical importance and meaningfulness of the appropriated modernist art, and secondarily on the theoretical and political ideologies with which

she “rationalizes” its creative “irrationality”. It is because she appropriates name-brand artists that she has become one herself, while nihilistically debunking and discrediting their art and its “unconscious premises” – a malevolent nihilism that betrays her unconscious anxiety about the significance of her somewhat artless art. She seems to turn modernist art into a “vacant signifier”, to use the philosopher Mikel Dufrenne’s term, by vacating it with her signature, but that signature is the vacant signifier, that is, it signifies the peculiar vacancy of her art, more pointedly, the ineffectiveness of the “strategy” of appropriation – hardly the act of critical consciousness it claims to be; indeed, her pretentious signature is the sign of reified – ideologized – criticality.

Whatever the “philosophical” rationale of Levine’s appropriation art, it emanates *déjà vu*, suggesting that, from a modernist perspective, it is pseudo-art, failed art. Postmodern appropriation art is more than an “ironical” offshoot of modernist art: it is bankrupted, endgame – indeed, dead-ended – art. It is post-art, unconsciously nostalgic for the good old creative days of modernist art, however self-consciously dancing on its grave. Unimaginative appropriation replaces imaginative innovation, with whatever dramatic feminist flair and ironical cunning, as in Cindy Sherman’s photographic appropriations of Old Master paintings of women, whether Madonnas or Salomes, among other stereotypes. In her theoretically and politically correct postmodernist restaging of them, more conspicuously narcissistic and fame-hungry than Levine’s restaging of modern masterpieces – Sherman always plays the famous actress (never the *ingénue*), as her Film Stills make clear – Sherman uses surreal and expressionist (modernist) devices to stir up emotion. However pyrotechnically intense, it remains standardized and superficial (“art is an act”) and thus not entirely convincing. Her work is somewhat more imaginative than Levine’s if equally dependent on past modernist achievements. It is also more insidiously false, for it blithely falsifies and satirizes the unconscious with a sort of tongue-in-cheek glee.

Both Levine and Sherman – exemplary postmodern appropriationists – rely on the past, whether the relatively recent or more distant past, because they can’t imagine any future for art. The future means manipulating the past in recognition that it always haunts the present. It is inescapable, and however incorrect, we are drawn back to it, as appropriation post-art shows despite itself, suggesting that it remains an oasis of meaning and value in the desert of decadence that is postmodernism. Appropriation implies disillusionment with the art of the past even as it envies it, but it also implies that it is what the psychoanalyst Gilbert Rose calls a necessary illusion. It is a permanent part of the collective unconscious, giving it an imaginative hold on art and life. Appropriation post-art is a paradoxical attempt to repress what remains irrepressible, as its dependence on the memorable art of the past indicates. Indeed, quoting it makes it more memorable.

The appropriation of art of all kinds is widespread in capitalist society: art serves the purposes of commerce and fashion, particularly famous art. Famous paintings – among them works by Rembrandt, Rubens, Ingres, and Manet – have been used to sell luxury products to female consumers. The traffic goes two ways, from high to low and vice versa, as Lawrence Alloway's concept of the fine art/popular culture continuum suggests. Warhol's appropriation of Celebrity Photographs and Richard Prince's appropriation of Motorcyclist Photographs (celebrities, not to say culture heroes, in their own right in a certain social world) supposedly upgrade them into Fine Art. In contrast, the populist commercial use of Fine Art downgrades it into accessibility, familiarity, everyday usefulness, bringing it down from its elitist heights by mass reproducing it (sometimes in altered form, as in the fashion photographs that turn Old Master nudes into clothes-hawking mannequins) and thus de-historicizing and democratizing it, that is, rendering it commonplace and with that no longer "mysterious" and estranging. "Aristocratic" High Art – the Goncourt brothers said that art was inherently "aristocratic" – is banalized by being brought down to socio-economic earth, while Low Mass Art – advertising in the case of Pop Art – gains prestige, as though it was elusively extraordinary, contained hidden unconscious depths and unexpected imaginative value, and, even more unexpectedly, was aesthetically subtle and ingeniously "conceptual".

Is High Art corrupted and Low Art whitewashed by this pseudo-dialectical integration? The question is meaningless in capitalist society, where art is a commodity among commodities, however sometimes a high-priced commodity out of the reach of the masses. They tend to be more awed by the price than the art, confirming that even priceless art has its price, and that its price becomes its meaning, indeed, appropriates its identity. André Breton famously said, referring to Duchamp's ready-mades, that an artist can confer the status of art on anything, in effect appropriating it for art. For Duchamp, something became art because it was invested with unconscious meaning, as he said in his 1946 essay on "The Creative Act". Today, capital confers status on art, which has become a kind of capital. It is only because something has been appropriated by capitalism that it has the status of art, whatever that means these postmodern days. Thus baseball cards were exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum as works of popular art. Acquiring aesthetic value and above all increasing in commercial value the older and rarer they became – the harder they were to find because they were no longer in mass circulation, and thus no longer commonplace – they finally became museum-worthy. The imprimatur of a world-class museum elevated them to the heights of Unique Art, suggesting that they were worthy of being collected by the discriminating connoisseur, even as it confirmed that they were an important contribution to "visual culture", for the postmodern museum is no longer the space of historically privileged works of art but a place where visual culture

is theatrically presented in all its indiscriminate variety. Visual art in all its cultural variety has been appropriated and absorbed by what Guy Debord called the “society of the capitalist spectacle”.

Any way one looks at it, art today has the Midas touch. Artists are pioneer gentrifiers and renewers of tired old neighborhoods, often industrial wastelands, raising real estate values to unprecedented heights, as New York’s Soho, Chelsea, and Meatpacking districts show. Old worlds are appropriated as art worlds, becoming quasi-aristocratic enclaves in mundane society. Art is redemptive of the rundown, as junk art shows, and junky neighborhoods are redeemed by becoming commercial art centers. In *Point Counter Point*, Aldous Huxley presciently described upper-class taste for lower-class life, which is one reason why trendy art galleries that cater to the rich like to be situated in (once) poor, slummy areas, as though to confirm that art is risk-taking and dangerous, as the clichés celebrating avant-garde art assert. Going to such galleries becomes an adventure, adding to the thrill of the art, assuming it can thrill one – a dubious assumption with respect to postmodern appropriation art. Appropriating thrilling art, as Levine does, confirms that it is no longer thrilling, or else replaces what was once a thrilling creativity with a simulated thrill, as Sherman does.

When Duchamp, the father of postmodern appropriation art, said that his appropriation of ready-made objects for art was an act of mind – that art should serve mind rather than animal instinct (as the Fauvist paintings he once made did) – he took the physical and emotional thrill out of art. Art as a kind of equivalent of mind – a basic tenet of conceptual art, involving the view that the physical material of art is merely a “platform” for its immaterial ideas (which are what really “make” it) – is art that has lost what the psychoanalyst Hanna Segal calls its “concrete punch”. Wisely, Solomon didn’t cut the art baby in half; unwisely, Duchamp did. Whether that “advances” art or puts it at a disadvantage is a matter of debate, considering that art has been regarded as a regression in the service of the ego, as the art historian and psychoanalyst Ernst Kris argues. It must involve both primitive instinct and subtle mindfulness, imaginatively integrated in a symbolic expression of experience, objectifying it while simultaneously conveying its sensation-rich immediacy and emotion-rich impact, to be convincing. Segal argues that art that does the latter better than the former is experienced as a “meaningless bombardment” – think of Pollock’s all-over gesturalism – while art that does the former better than the latter is experienced as all too intellectual, and with that an expressive failure. It is the complaint the early modernists made against nineteenth-century academic painting, and why Picasso preferred Cézanne’s anxiety and Van Gogh’s self-torment to Jacques Émile Blanche’s beauty.

Capitalized, art has become a way of capitalizing the undercapitalized and underpriced – and everything is undercapitalized and underpriced, that is, commercially undervalued, from a capitalist point of view. Marilyn Monroe

was undercapitalized until Warhol gave her a second life by appropriating her appearance, Keri Crème was undercapitalized until an Ingres odalisque rubbed it on her naked body, making it – and her body – more marketable. One might say that ideas were undercapitalized until Duchamp marketed them as expensive art. Art is the final stamp of approval on a product, making it more expensive, and thus more marketable to the capitalist elite – I know of rich collectors who would not buy a work if it was cheap (unless, of course, they were placing a speculative bet on its future increase in monetary value) – and with that more sexy, that is, irresistibly seductive, for in capitalist society there is nothing more alluring, consciously and unconsciously, than money, the bigger the better. Marilyn Monroe and Keri Crème – both playing starring roles in advertising commercials, both mass-produced products given a new exclusivity by art – became transcendental commodities by way of their marketing as art. And so did Duchamp's ready-mades, all the more so because they showed that ideas could be entertaining. His philosophical art puzzles are endless intellectual entertainment, for the mind-teasing question they raise – are his found objects art or are they junk? – is unanswerable. Are they art in name – “art” being the everyday object's imperial new clothing – or are they “really” art? We can never “really” know. Postmodernist appropriation art implies that there is no “real” art, or else that art has no reality, except, perhaps, if it is theoretically, socially, and above all commercially “realized”. Thus, Mondrian's abstract icons became “real art” – fashionably real and fashionable art – when Yves St. Laurent appropriated them for his dresses and boots, making them iconic and Mondrian's abstractions consumable, not to say expensive. The same fate has overtaken numerous literary as well as visual works.

In his essay “The Style all'antica: Imitation and Assimilation”, Ernst Gombrich distinguished between a “transmuted motif”, that is, a visual theme or idea used innovatively or inventively, and “faithful copying ... degenerating into sheer repetition of the model”.² On the one hand, transforming the model “as the bee transforms the nectar into honey, or as the body assimilates its nourishment”, an idea from Seneca. On the other hand, “the mechanical imitation of one model or style”, which Quintilian opposed. The former is a creative act, the latter is pseudo-creative. Creativity means making the found or traditional motif one's own by metabolizing it or else using it as a catalyst or stimulant. Imitation simply appropriates it. It is the difference between creative intuition of tradition, and passive identification with its imprint, as though its authority was indisputable, unavoidable, and absolute. By that standard, Duchamp's found objects are not creative, unless “intellectually” adjusting and appropriating them to change their meaning is creative. It is no more creative than Ramses's “representational” adjustment and appropriation

2 Gombrich, *Norm and Form*, pp. 122–8.

of the statues of old pharaohs is creative. In both cases, the “difference” made is trivial, however equally pretentious.

Creativity involves a modernizing response to the motif, transforming it so that it bespeaks contemporary human as well as artistic concerns. The more psychosocially relevant the model, the more aesthetically fresh it becomes, and vice versa. It comes to seem “original” as well as “appropriate” to the lifeworld. Pseudo-creativity – the creativity (if one wants to call it that) of the mechanical imitator – involves routine obedience to the model: precedent has the authority of a formula. The vital motif becomes an absolute model, a procrustean template. Artistic deviation and creative dissent become rebellious insubordination, punishable by ostracism: the deviant dissenter is dismissed as a failed artist, even a barbaric anti-artist – not only beyond the pale of art but its enemy. The work of Duchamp, Levine, and Sherman falls somewhere between the extremes, that is, it exists in a state of precarious “undecidability”, to use Derrida’s term. But, if Duchamp’s assertion that he is a ruthless “negator” is taken seriously, he, and his conceptual followers, among them Levine and Sherman, are clearly anti-artists, mockingly imitating art in the act of erasing it – turning it into a problem so that it loses conviction, presence, believability – so that one loses faith in it. Whichever way one looks at it, their work is beside the symbolic/expressive point of art, that is, it looks like an ironically intellectual, self-congratulatory exercise, pointless beyond its cleverly limited point. However great “the acuteness of [their] intellect”, to quote Spinoza’s comment on Descartes³ – and it is not clear how acute the conceptual anti-artist’s intellect is, not clear that it requires acute intellect to use appropriation to make (or rather unmake) art – intellect is useless unless it is used “to lend a helping hand” to humanity, more pointedly, to “relieve the great burden of human anxiety”, as Spinoza also said. Since antiquity, art has done that – why should it stop doing it?

Originality is only possible on the basis of tradition, as Winnicott says – assuming that tradition is a kind of “facilitating environment” rather than a dead-weight – but the appropriation of tradition can be unoriginal, as Gombrich says, that is, a neutralizing of tradition into Alexandrian kitsch, as Greenberg suggests. Dilthey’s differentiation of “an experience that is more emotional than intellectual, where feelings arouse feelings, with no other intermediary than the expression itself” – what he calls *Nacherleben* – is another way of formulating Gombrich’s distinction between the creative and uncreative appropriation of tradition, the former fraught with feeling for it, the latter largely an intellectual matter. For the creative appropriator, the motif is “a living experience [that] has externalized itself in the shape of an expression”. The “perceived expression [is] internalized in the shape of a *Nachbild* (a replica) in the shape of the experience expressed.” The creative

3 de Spinoza, *Ethics*, p. 51.

appropriator “live[s] over again, *nacherlebe*” the experience expressed (or embodied) in the motif. “To reproduce is to re-live”, Dilthey wrote (“*Nachbilden ist eben Nacherleben*”) – at least in the case of the organic reproduction that is the expression in contrast to mechanical reproduction.⁴ As I would put it, the creative appropriator is re-living and re-feeling the experience expressed in the motif, in contrast to the pseudo-creative appropriator, who is able to read the letter of the motif but has no feeling for its spirit. The former organically relates to what is humanly authentic in the motif, the latter treats the socially established model as a reified habit, not to say “role model”. One might say the creative appropriator finds the inner life in the dead motif, while the mechanical appropriator is a necrophiliac of form.

Another distinction emerges from Gombrich’s fundamental one: between context-independent and context-dependent appropriation. In the former, form is unaffected by context. It is in effect axiomatically pre-set. What is appropriated is a concept – a “principle”. The motif expressively exemplifies the principle – the concept counts, not the motif that expressively exemplifies or “exhibits” it. Individual works become examples of the general principle. They gain their meaning only through the meaningful principle – it is the carrier of meaning, not the work that goes into expressing it, which means giving it aesthetic and human “character”. Thus Mondrian’s privileging of the right angle, primary colors, and black and white is more to the point of his art than the artistry of any particular work that illustrates its basic principles. Similarly, Judd’s concept of the specific object matters more than any particular object he orders manufactured. LeWitt’s notion that the concept matters more than its “formal” execution makes the point succinctly. In contrast, in context-dependent appropriation, form/style is derived from the sign system of the context. Pop Art’s appropriation of motifs – brand names and brand signifiers – from commercial culture is a salient example. So is the Abstract Expressionist use of energetic gestures, according to many interpreters emblematic of New York energy, even American power. Context of use seems to override art historical originality.

Ironical appropriation and applied appropriation is yet another distinction that can be built on Gombrich. In ironical appropriation, the motif is double-coded so that it becomes meaningful in contradictory contexts. Duchamp’s ready-mades are the famous example: theoretical magic turns them into art even as they remain meaningful as non-art. In applied appropriation, the motif is used as an ornament or emblem, which assumes that its meaning remains constant whatever its context. Removed from its “original” context, it is used as a quotation in different contexts. This occurs in Rauschenberg’s combines and prints. They have been described as a sum of quotations that do not add up to a consistent narrative, however often the same motifs are used

4 Dilthey, “Die Kunst als erste Darstellung”, p. 277.

in them. They suggest that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between ironical and applied appropriation.

I suggest that appropriation can be understood on a sliding psychodynamic scale: introjection (taking in) of the motif, internalization of the motif (making it part of oneself), and identification with the motif (becoming one with it, so that it becomes a habitual part of one's art). Such an object-relational approach implies that appropriation always involves transference ("a new edition of an old object relationship", as Freud said⁵). As such, it invariably is an unconscious as well as conscious dialectic of past history and present experience. One question always haunts appropriation: what is the contemporary significance of the bygone motif? What makes it poignantly valuable – or at least seriously interesting – today? Why has it become creatively viable again? Why does it imaginatively resonate with importance? But then, as I have tried to show, the psychodynamics of appropriation seem to be overshadowed by its social dynamics in postmodernity. Gauguin already understood this. "In art", he wrote, "there are two types of people: revolutionaries and plagiarists. And, in the end, doesn't the revolutionary's work become official, once the State takes it over?"⁶ Postmodern appropriation art plagiarizes revolutionary modern art, confirming that it has been institutionalized by the powers that be, and thus rendered impotent, or, if one wants, turned into another theoretical and capitalist plaything, another status symbol. Ramses always gets his way.

Handlist of Artists

SHERRIE LEVINE (B. 1947)

She first emerged into prominence with her 1979 re-photographs of photographs by Walker Evans. She went on to do photographs of photographs of Van Gogh paintings that appeared in a book about his art; she also did water color paintings copied from a Leger work. Perhaps her most notorious work is her 1991 "Fountain", a bronze urinal after Duchamp's 1917 "Fountain", a marble urinal. The two should probably be mentioned together.

CINDY SHERMAN (B. 1954)

Virtually all her works are called "Untitled Film Stills", with a number for the individual work. The "original" Untitled Film Stills were made in 1977–80. In them she appears as a B-movie, foreign film, and film noir actress, among other "roles". In 1981, she did a "Centerfold" series, and in 1989 a "Sex" series, using parts of medical model dummies with various accessories. Everything

5 Freud, "Fragment of an Analysis", p. 116; cf. Greenson, *Technique and Practice of Psychoanalysis*, p. 152.

6 Gauguin, *Writings of a Savage*, p. 70.

is staged. In the 1990s she did what I have called her “Old Master” series, in which she uses images of women from Old Master paintings, usually surreally, even grotesquely distorted (as in the “Sex” series, but not as much).

ALLAN KAPROW (1927–2006)

The heyday of his happenings was 1961–62. Perhaps the most well-known is “Eighteen Happenings in Six Acts”.

ANDY WARHOL (1928–87)

“Liz” (1964) seems the best example, although you can take any one of the Marilyn Monroes, Elvis Presleys, Campbell Soup Cans, and so on, as examples. The “Death and Disaster” series of 1962–63 is all based on newspaper photographs.

RICHARD PRINCE (B. 1949)

Does what he calls “re-photographs”. “Spiritual America”, 1983, is a famous series, and recently there is the even more female sex-obsessed “Canal Zone” series, 2008. (He was born there.)

ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG (1925–2008)

“Factum I” and “Factum II” (1957) were very influential proto-appropriation works.

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Epilogue

Open Sesame: The Art Treasures of the World on Call

Richard Brilliant

The appropriation of existing works of art and architecture for subsequent reuse takes many forms. They range from an outright physical removal of the material original – in whole or in part – to the strategy of incorporating elements of the original invoked by substitutional representations thereof, leaving the condition of the original unchanged. The term “appropriation” has two distinct lexical applications: one involves setting apart something for an approved use which can render the taking morally neutral; the other characterizes taking possession of something that effectively deprives the original of its own property, an action often open to negative criticism. In either case, the appropriation of artworks subsequently involves a series of transformative actions, or adjustments, needed to assimilate the borrowed elements into a new artistic context.

Art historical scholarship has long feasted on the identification of sources, on the establishment of the historical filiation of motifs in the visual arts, on typological continuities of forms and functions, and on the demonstration of access to works of art as possible, influential models. Receptivity is a necessary qualification, leading to the effective assimilation of the source in some positive reaction to its presence. The success of that assimilation depends to a large degree on the state of prior knowledge and on an active interest in acquisition, which, occurring together, stimulate the desire to appropriate. Accordingly, the trajectory from material deprivation to respectful derivation involves a change of status, of location, and of historical presence in the transfer from the original to its recipient.

Some actions of material appropriation are so blatant that they constitute looting, where works of art are taken away by conquerors. The parade of sacred objects taken from the Temple in Jerusalem appears in a large Roman relief sculpture set in the passage of the Triumphal Arch of Titus

in Rome.¹ The explicit detail of this representation, a simulacrum of the original, establishes the objects' evidentiary value for this manifestation of Roman power in Jerusalem as well as in Rome. In result, the Roman artwork constitutes a direct instantiation of the transfer of the precious material into an artistic representation thereof, thereby investing this act of rapacious looting into the pre-existing conventional repertoire of Roman triumphal imagery. Doing so, however, had no attributable effect on the generation of new art forms, partly because the foreign source was too limited and did not carry with it systemic qualities of image-making. Still, the possession of such objects of value to "the other" reflects the cultural weight placed on these objects, in which, or by which, cultural identity is revealed. Separation, then, can be bitterly opposed, witness the creation of the laws protecting the patrimonial culture of states whose archaeological or ethnic wealth requires a bar to their alienation.

Works of visual art – monumental or in miniature – seem to belong to a special category of culturally produced objects, especially when they exist in a material state. Whether or not such objects have been fetishized, their intimate connection to the originating cultures endows them with *authenticity*, that specially posited relationship among artist, public, and culture that constitutes the foundation of connoisseurship and the historical evidence for the time and place of making. Art history and the patrimonial laws for the protection of cultural artifacts rely on the legitimacy of these asserted associations in support of the particularities of artistic creativity, inconceivable in a cultural vacuum.

The more common indirect appropriation of artworks sublimates for material taking by a reliance on the value of substitutional mechanisms of transference which exploit the formal presentation of ideas presented by authoritative images. Their employment, especially in the case of architecture, may be consistent with perceived standards of *décor*, or some other synthesizing impulse like typological consistency, or analogous usage in order to achieve a coherent design. The very emulation of honored forms and images, expressed as a gesture of respect, nevertheless can evolve into a new context of interpretation.

George Kubler in *The Shape of Time* (1962) marked the importance of the *re-entrance* of an established, older, or foreign artistic repertoire into a new artistic context; it requires a conjunctive effort, motivated by a sense of potential utility to extend the possibilities of representation and empowered by the absence of resistance. Artistic originality does not, therefore, lie in the primal acts of invention but in the creative application of formal, even ideographic propositions, adapted to a suitable purpose or context without regard to alleged historical or art-cultural boundaries. The effectiveness of that

1 See Yarden, *Spoils of Jerusalem on the Arch of Titus*.

creative entrance depends on the presence of multiple exemplars, or models, whose successive reception changes attitudes and prepares the ground for the generation of new works of art.

An important aspect of reception concerns discovery, itself a function of awareness. David Summers made the point that the Roman marble sculpture known as the *Torso Belvedere*, in the Vatican Museums, need not have been unnoticed before its “discovery” by Michelangelo.² He became conscious of the *Torso* as a potential, even inspirational model because he and his contemporaries were already attracted to the expressive possibilities in the male nude and were thoroughly prepared to grasp the essence of an appropriated antique statue in creating new art, and not the replication of Antiquity. Of course, Michelangelo adapted the antique sculptural model to his personal sculptural language, probably under the influence of strong current interest in the arts of classical Antiquity and their emphasis on the human figure. The reworking of ancient art is more than a response to “influence”; it exemplifies the creative possibilities, typical of the exercise of appropriative strategies directed to novel formal solutions. For Michelangelo, in particular, the powerful affect was embodied in the nude male torso alone, since the statue was headless and lacked most of its limbs and therefore precluded any attempt at making an iconographical connection. His reaffirmation of the centrality of the human body as a topos of vast interpretive potential marks the generation of an ideologically driven position about how and why to make art. His appreciative appropriation of antique models had brought into being a liberalized creativity; Antiquity fused with modernity in his hands.

The current global marketplace for proven eye- and mind-catching images has opened an encyclopedic repertoire of artworks and prepared them for limitless exploitation, whether for artistic or commercial reasons. Visual access to an extraordinary variety of forms and images, from everywhere and from every time period and culture, is so all-encompassing that effective discrimination seems almost impossible. Furthermore, the seductive power of virtual reality and its expression in the everyday world has encouraged artists and purveyors of imagery, derived from multiple sources, to adopt a mode of substitutional inclusion without apparent prejudice, so long as their work is effective in catching the attention of the public. The prevalence of the visual image, coupled with a taste for explorations in virtual reality, has further diminished the opportunistic appropriation of material objects and works of art for reuse, although the market for them among collectors and museums remains strong, perhaps a concession to the old view that *authenticity* still counts.

Anachronistic elements, as well as exotic interlopers, make their appearance in works of visual art, responding to the desire to assimilate a variety of images

2 Summers, “Contrapposto”, pp. 326–61, esp. 336–7.

into a meaningful ensemble, comprehensible to contemporaries.³ Historical precedents for this ecumenical practice exist, as if the amalgamation of diverse elements could buttress the claim for cultural hegemony by displaying the collective ensemble and its integration into contemporary works of art, considered as a repository of “found art”. Distinctions of time and place seem to disappear, not quite in the denial of difference or in opposition to the creative role of memory as a medium of integration, except when the flotation of images comes to rest in a modern artist’s mind.

Alas, it is unclear how well shared memory, the bedrock of culture, perseveres. As the provenance of works of art, whether in the form of material objects or as transient visual images, recedes from the consciousness of the observer, only the immediacy of the present effect remains; historically aware culture, which endows works of art with contextual value and traditional constructs, disappears into the all-consuming NOW. The encyclopedic visual repertoire available through the internet and other readily accessible electronic media blurs the old distinctions among historical artistic cultures. The totality of the world of art has opened to full exploitation in an unprecedented manner, yet it is consistent with contemporary attitudes about the irrelevance of authorial connection and with the triumph of virtuality as a substitute for what used to be treasured as “the real thing”. In an environment convinced of the value of the make-believe, considerations of appropriation, of the routes of reference thereby engendered, seem less and less important, as the historical layering of the past fuses into the horizontal stratum of the ever-present.

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3 Nagle and Wood, “Interventions”, pp. 403–24, 429–32.

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