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**Discourses of cultural heritage in times of crisis– the case of
the Parthenon Marbles**

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Discourses of cultural heritage in times of crisis– the case of the Parthenon Marbles

ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on the commodification and politicisation of cultural heritage using as a case study the ongoing debate on the return of the Parthenon Marbles from the UK to Greece. Greece has been in the throes of a severe financial crisis for over six years with the ever imminent threat of Grexit, leaving or staying in the Eurozone, constantly disputed. In parallel with this ongoing turmoil, discourses in the media concerning Greek antiquity have been persistently prominent within and without the country. In this context, the paper aims to problematise the complex nexus of relationships between the financial crisis, national identity and cultural heritage.

We combine the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) and Interactional Sociolinguistics (IS) and apply our framework to the controversy surrounding the Parthenon Marbles reignited by the press release for the movie ‘The Monuments Men’ in 2014. The paper draws on data from an online forum and investigates how the users negotiate pro-/anti-return positions and make the financial crisis relevant in the argumentation process.

The intricate and incestuous relationship between heritage and national identity becomes more intense and contentious in times of crisis. The analysis of the data shows that history, identity, value, and debt are recontextualised in relation to the Parthenon sculptures. The analysis identifies an underlying process of value *trade off* and brings the current political and economic environment to the fore. We close the paper by foregrounding the implications of our study and provide directions for further research.

Το άρθρο αυτό αποσκοπεί να ανιχνεύσει χαρακτηριστικά εμπορευματοποίησης και πολιτικοποίησης της Ελληνικής πολιτιστικής κληρονομιάς εξετάζοντας το debate γύρω από την επιστροφή των μαρμάρων του Παρθενώνα από το Ηνωμένο Βασίλειο στην Ελλάδα.

Θέματα αναφορικά με τη σημασία της ελληνικής αρχαιότητας επανέρχονται στο προσκήνιο και καταλαμβάνουν σημαντική θέση στον ελληνικό και διεθνή τύπο στο πλαίσιο της δριμείας οικονομικής κρίσης που ταλαιπωρεί την ελληνική κοινωνία για περισσότερα από έξι έτη και ενώ η απειλή του Grexit, η έξοδος της χώρας από την Ευρωζώνη, παραμένει επίκαιρη.

Επιχειρείται εδώ η καταγραφή των πολύπλευρων συσχετισμών μεταξύ οικονομικής κρίσης, εθνικής ταυτότητας και πολιτιστικής κληρονομιάς. Συνδυάζουμε το Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) και το Interactional Sociolinguistics (IS) και εξετάζουμε την επανα-επικαιροποιημένη συζήτηση γύρω από τα μάρμαρα του Παρθενώνα που ακολούθησε το δελτίο τύπου της ταινίας ‘The Monuments Men’ το 2014.

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2

Το υλικό της ανάλυσής αντλήθηκε από ένα διαδικτυακό forum και η μελέτη αφορά στον τρόπο με τον οποίο απόψεις υπερ/κατά της επιστροφής των μαρμάρων συνδέονται με την οικονομική κρίση στην επιχειρηματολογία των χρηστών. Το θεωρητικό πλαίσιο της έρευνας διαμορφώνεται από τις έννοιες της πολιτιστικής κληρονομιάς και της εθνικής ταυτότητας, έννοιες αλληλένδετες, ιδιαίτερα σε καιρούς κρίσης.

Η ανάλυση των δεδομένων αποσκοπεί στη διερεύνηση διαφόρων εκφάνσεων πολιτιστικής κληρονομιάς και στην ανάδειξη του τρόπου με τον οποίο η ιστορία, η εθνική ταυτότητα και το χρέος επαναπροσδιορίζονται σε σχέση με τα μάρμαρα του Παρθενώνα. Τα αποτελέσματα της ανάλυσης δείχνουν μια διαδικασία επαναδιαπραγμάτευσης υλικών και κοινωνικο-πολιτιστικών αξιών και φέρνουν στο προσκήνιο την υπάρχουσα πολιτική και οικονομική κατάσταση. Η εργασία ολοκληρώνεται με προτάσεις για περαιτέρω έρευνα.

Keywords: Heritage, discourse, online communities, commodification, crisis,

Parthenon Marbles, DHA/IS

Word count: 11652

Introductionⁱ

Greece has been hit by a financial crisis which has severely affected the living standards of the population. Since the mid- to late 2000s Greece has teetered on the brink of default several times (2010; 2014; most recently June 2015) and the latest developments (2016) have seen Greece once more on the verge of Grexit. Over the past 6 years both New Democracy (former) and Syriza-Anel (current) governments have implemented serial Draconian austerity measures and acceded to universally unpopular structural reforms to remain eligible to receive funds from the European Union (EU) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to maintain liquidity. However, despite promises from politicians that the pain involved was the necessary road to salvation, the measures have proved largely fruitless, and the deficit has inexorably grown since the beginning of the crisis (from 109,4% of GDP to 178,6% in 2014 and 176,9% in 2015, ELSTAT 2015, EUROSTAT 2016). Whatever optimism existed has evaporated; to be replaced by uncertainty and incipient despondency in official and everyday discourses. Outside the country, anti-Greek sentiment spread in international media (particularly from 2010-2014), and the associated pejorative attributes have contributed to an ambient negative public opinion of a ‘corrupt’ and ‘lazy’ country and people (see Wodak and Angouri, 2014 for different case studies).

In this context, discourses of a ‘glorious’ past have become particularly prominent in the Greek media and in public discourses. The foregrounding of the significance of Greek heritage for global (and particularly European) civilisation as a strategy for counteracting the negative national image is evident. Narratives and symbols from ancient Greek history and mythology proliferate and are exploited for national consumption – as with extreme right parties (and notably the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn)

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1
2
3 or are mobilised by international media for indexing support or blame (e.g. the image
4
5 of Aphrodite of Milo on magazines, Spiegel, 20 April 2011).
6

7 Against this backdrop, this paper taps into the complexity of everyday political
8
9 discourse in mediated public spheres. ‘Crisis’ and ‘normality’ have become
10
11 tautological in Greece; discourses about heritage and crises overlap and political
12
13 discourse has become normalised as small talk. People seek to position themselves on
14
15 matters directly concerning their daily realities, and in so doing seek to rationalise a
16
17 rapidly changing political and economic environment. Heritage discourse is not
18
19 necessarily political, but the recontextualisation of symbols to (re)negotiate a positive
20
21 national identity in the current context, clearly is. National identity is understood here
22
23 as a construct built on an imaginary of homogeneity and belonging using essentialised
24
25 common-sense inferences of symbols, conventions and simplified representations of
26
27 the nation (Billig 1995). This contributes to a ‘national habitus’ (Wodak 2015) which
28
29 in turn furnishes a resource for positioning in space and time. We discuss this further
30
31 in relation to heritage symbolism below.
32
33
34
35

36 We draw on the debate on the return of the Parthenon Marbles to Greece from the
37
38 British Museum as a case study. The return negotiations have a long history and pro-
39
40 return campaigns have resurfaced at different times and historical and political
41
42 circumstances. The debate has recently reignited in the aftermath of a successful
43
44 Hollywood film, ‘The Monuments Men’. The Columbia Pictures film, directed by
45
46 George Clooney and written and produced by Clooney and Grant Heslov, is loosely
47
48 based on the non-fiction book ‘The Monuments Men: Allied Heroes, Nazi Thieves
49
50 and the Greatest Treasure Hunt in History’ (Edsel and Witter, 2013) and focuses on
51
52 the return of artistic masterpieces (mostly paintings and sculptures) stolen by the
53
54 Nazis during WWII. Following the release of the film, Clooney and the rest of the
55
56 cast took an explicit position at the press conference (Feb 2014) held for the
57
58
59
60

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1
2
3 promotion of the film, in favour of returning of the marbles. For instance, Clooney
4
5 suggested it is ‘the right thing to do’ and ‘a very fair and very nice thing’ while
6
7 Murrey echoed that ‘London's gotten crowded. There's plenty of room in Greece.
8
9 England could take the lead on this.’ The show business setting and popularity of key
10
11 agents contributed to the visibility of the topic which went viral and became hotly
12
13 debated in online environments. This provided a new frame for the discussion of the
14
15 issue and re-opened it, yet again but more prominently, in the public sphere; this time
16
17 against the backdrop of Greece and Europe embroiled in a deep and divisive financial
18
19 crisis.
20
21

22
23 The paper draws on posts in the *Comment is Free* environment of the *Guardian*;
24
25 a popular public domain with large numbers of usernames interacting over issues
26
27 discussed in the newspaper’s hard copy or online pages.
28

29
30 We draw on the analysis of 947 postings debating the return of the Parthenon
31
32 Marbles. Social media have provided new times and localities for the negotiation of
33
34 dominant discourses, highlighting the importance of research tapping into the
35
36 processes of online argumentation for understanding the changing political sphereⁱⁱ.
37

38
39 We seek to integrate analytical principles from interactional sociolinguistics (IS)
40
41 and the discourse-historical approach (DHA) (Reisigl and Wodak 2015; Angouri and
42
43 Wodak 2014; Wodak 2015). This allows us to analytically dissect the multiple layers
44
45 of context and look into the ways in which online users construct and negotiate
46
47 cultural heritage, national identities, and the current economic and political context in
48
49 the data. The DHA/IS frame (Angouri and Wodak, in prep) provides the theoretical
50
51 tools to systematically link the IS focus on the ‘speech event’ (Gumperz & Cook-
52
53 Gumperz 2008:536) with the DHA’s theoretical and analytical apparatus for
54
55 analysing and positioning a text within its wider socio-political and ideological
56
57 contexts (Wodak, 2015). We combine a macro- and micro- level analysis and explore
58
59
60

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1
2
3 how the users position themselves and others in the context of the debate (IS) and the
4
5 pro- or anti-return arguments they draw on (DHA) to trace and deconstruct the
6
7 interdependence and instrumentalisation of national identity politics in conflicts about
8
9 heritage and the commodification of culture. Although we do not discuss the use of
10
11 social media for political activity per se, the work has a contribution to make to the
12
13 study of online communities for political debate. We structure the paper in three parts:
14
15 first, we provide an overview of the Parthenon Marbles issue then turn to our
16
17 theoretical framework, affordances of the methodology we advocate and the analysis
18
19 of our dataset. Finally, we close the article with the implications of our findings and
20
21 directions for further research.
22
23
24
25
26
27

The Parthenon Marbles: a socio-historic overview

28
29
30 The Parthenon Marbles, also referred to as the Elgin marbles (After Lord Elgin,
31
32 ambassador to the Ottoman court of the Sultan in Istanbul (1801-1812)) include the
33
34 collection of sculptures, inscriptions and architectural features acquired for the British
35
36 government by Lord Elgin in 1816 now exhibited in the British Museum in the
37
38 Duveen Gallery (Room 18). Under Elgin's instructions, the marbles were removed
39
40 from the Acropolis (the Parthenon, the Erechtheion, the Propylaia, and the Temple of
41
42 Athena Nike). The timeline (see Figure 1) demonstrates various stages in the travails
43
44 of the marbles since their creation in the 5th century BC, considered relevant to the
45
46 discussion here. Since the 1980s, after Melina Merkouri's (a Greek actress and
47
48 minister of culture) political campaign, the issue has become a matter of official
49
50 government involvement (established among the official goals in the Ministry of
51
52 Culture).
53
54
55
56
57
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59
60

INSERT FIGURE 1. ABOUT HERE

The timing of the shift towards an official agenda should be understood within the a frame of global implications relating to the transition from modernity to late modernity, or capitalist to late-capitalist economies, when post-nationalistic tendencies gave place to the resurgence of the nation-state: neoliberal tensions evoke new dimensions for the national narrative and create a new space for tourism to become a dominant economic ‘asset’.

The employment of symbolic heritage items in the official discourses around the construction of Greek national narratives was first introduced in the 19th century and served in constructing a hegemonic myth of a heroic past. This mythologising also draws on the general shift of attention in Europe back to Classicism in the 17th century, as the timeline (Figure 1) delineates. Ever since its Merkouri inspired resurgence, the debate on the return of the marbles has had a sustained but fluctuating presence in the media’s attention and imagery (Hamilakis 2010[1999]).

In July 2014, the Greek government requested that UNESCO act as a mediator in resolving the matter; a proposition declined by the British government (8th of April 2014). Negotiations with UNESCO are still open, as recent statements by the current Greek minister of culture demonstrate (e.g. Helena Smith, *The Guardian*, May 2016). The Greek side addresses the issue at the level of national politics, as integral to the Greek historical heritage; however, the British side frames the request as commodification, at the level of bilateral controversies between museums, embracing the concept of the Universal Museum. Abungu (2004) and Mimiotis (2014) problematising the criteria set out to characterise a museum as ‘universal’, scrutinising the characteristics of the museums that have self-proclaimed adherence to the term since its inception in 2002. In particular, they draw on the Declaration on the

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1
2
3 Importance of Universal Museums that was signed in 2002 by 19 world-class
4
5 prominent museums, all of European or American origin. Fiskesjö (2010) criticises
6
7 the inherent and palpable contradictions in the founding principles of the declaration,
8
9 intrinsic to its explicitly euro-centric/western position and perspective. The Greek
10
11 government's main argument for the return of the Marbles is not centred on the
12
13 commonly debated dispute around the legality of the acquisition but on the
14
15 reunification of the sculptures as a coherent whole; restoring and enhancing
16
17 understanding of the monument. The new Acropolis Museum equipped with all the
18
19 technical facilities required for conservation and replete with pioneering ways of
20
21 display comprises a significant component of the Greek government's argument for
22
23 the reunification of the sculptures.
24
25
26

27 In February 2014 the statements of the 'The Monuments Men' cast sparked the
28
29 debate anew. John Whittingdale, chairman of the Culture, Media and Sport
30
31 Committee in the UK, criticised Clooney's 'poor knowledge on the topic'. Boris
32
33 Johnson, mayor of London at the time, also cast ironic aspersions on Clooney's stance
34
35 and knowledge (Ian Johnston, *Independent*, February 2014), while the British
36
37 Museum, through a representative, stated that 'anybody is entitled to their view' and
38
39 that the museum's trustees had 'always been very clear that they feel there's a public
40
41 benefit to having the sculptures in our collection remain part of our collection'. On
42
43 the Greek official side, Clooney's statements were welcomed with great enthusiasm,
44
45 prompting Panos Panayotopoulos, the then minister of Culture and Sports, to send an
46
47 official letter of gratitude to Clooney and reiterate the official arguments in favour of
48
49 the petition.
50
51
52

53 The discussions continued, as in October 2014 Amal Alamuddin Clooney, a
54
55 human rights lawyer and Clooney's wife, visited Athens, along with barrister
56
57 Geoffrey Robertson and jurist Norman Palmer, to underpin the cause from a legal
58
59
60

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perspective; holding a series of meetings with government officials, including the then Prime Minister, Antonis Samaras, and the Minister of Culture, Konstantinos Tasoulas. In May 2015 the international legal team handed the Greek government a detailed report suggesting taking the case to the International Criminal Court. However, the Greek government rejected the proposal on the premise of preferring a diplomatic and political approach, and Amal Alamuddin Clooney officially withdrew in December 2015.

The popularity of key agents, a financial crisis in Europe in full swing and Greece in the spotlight of international media contributed to the continuing visibility of and moiling debate surrounding the topic in both offline and online discursive environments; thus providing a new frame for the revival of the debate in the public sphereⁱⁱⁱ.

The act of restoring a piece of art to its original geographic location of creation is associated with three adjacent but distinctive terms: *restitution*, *repatriation*, *return*. Restitution is a legal term that refers to ‘cultural material that has been removed illegally from its country of origin’ (Carducci 2008:128); repatriation is less frequently used in legal contexts and embeds an essentialist and rather linear/static understanding of the relation between the artefact and the *patria* associated with the geographic location of a nation. The term *return*, which we favour here, gives a broader application to the notion, without necessarily alluding to an ‘illicit’ removal in strict legal terms (Carducci 2008), and is the one that is most frequently used in the Parthenon Marbles debate.

In the case of symbolic artefacts, disputes about ownership and return campaigns are visible, appealing for public consumption, and provide fertile ground for the reification of powerful national narratives (De Cillia and Wodak 2009), myths of heroic pasts and related ideals, particularly in times of crisis.

Heritage and the construction of symbolic values

In the context of evolving late capitalistic societies, studies on multilingualism, English lingua franca, linguistic landscape, linguistic commodification, authenticity and heritage tourism (e.g. Coupland et al. 2005; Heller et.al. 2014) are becoming increasingly prominent in the sociolinguistic and applied linguistic literature. Particularly in relation to tourism studies, scholars have addressed issues of commodifying authenticity in touristic heritage sites (e.g. Kelly-Holmes and Pietikainen 2014) and have shown the multiple and often contradictory discourses that construct the ‘in/authentic’ in promotional material and everyday discourses (Coupland and Coupland 2014). Much less attention has been paid to the construction of heritage in public political discourse^{iv} however, and our paper seeks to contribute to rectifying this omission. The overarching question we seek to address is the relationship between heritage, national identity and political discourse in times of crisis.

Here, we understand heritage as the contextually constructed representation of the past, a negotiated amalgam of situated discourse (Lowenthal 1988). Heritage discourses through which ‘the past processed through mythology, ideology, nationalism, local pride, romantic ideas, or just plain marketing [turns] into a commodity’ (Schouten 1995:21) are particularly relevant to national myths and ideologies.

We align with Appadurai’s (1986:13) description of commodification as ‘the situation in which [an object’s] exchangeability (past, present, or future) for some other thing is its socially relevant feature.’ Commodification then captures the process of attributing commercial (economic) value to goods or services that were never originally intended to be traded, turning them into, or treating them as mere

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11

1
2
3 commodities^v. The inferences of heritage are subject to discursive negotiation and
4
5 contextual relativity, drawing on local, regional and national affiliations, including
6
7 references to historical monuments and artefacts, traditional rituals and music.
8

9
10 In a neoliberal setting, the commercial heritage industry commodifies symbolic
11
12 representations of the past into heritage products ‘as part of a modern consumption of
13
14 entertainment’, such as strategically enacted neo-ecotourism where people expect, for
15
16 instance, to be photographed next to the ‘real’ Incas in Peru (Graham et al. 2000:1;
17
18 Kelly-Holmes and Pietikainen 2014). Accordingly, the value of heritage becomes a
19
20 quantifiable notion and a tradable one too (e.g. ‘Register your interest to own a piece
21
22 of East London Heritage’ – on a real estate advertising billboard). Pieces of artefacts
23
24 and objects of antiquity or other historical legacies are employed in marketing
25
26 campaigns, touristic advertisements and branding strategies (e.g. on rebranding
27
28 Greece^{vi}) as emblematic symbols of collectively imagined identities and serve a dual
29
30 purpose: both of shaping national ideologies (internally) and establishing an official
31
32 image resistant to external challenge or falsification (Kofos 1989; Heller et al. 2014).
33
34
35

36 [W]hat cannot be valued cannot be priced and cannot be traded and yet it is
37
38 precisely these values that are exploited within economic development
39
40 strategies (Graham et al. 2000:131).
41

42
43 The attribution of value is understood here as a context-based process, constantly
44
45 negotiated and co-constructed in discursive situ.
46

47
48 In the case of the Parthenon Marbles, within the revived context of independent
49
50 nation-states and ‘a diversified market that undergoes constant transformations and
51
52 requires continuous renewal’ (Heller et al. 2014:561), the Marbles have become the
53
54 symbolic embodiment of imagined linear ethnic affiliations between modern and
55
56 ancient Greece. This nationally constructed sacralisation of the Marbles has
57
58 transformed them into an emblematic object of national identification. On these
59
60

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1
2
3 premises, the incorporation of the Marbles' return into the official agenda of the
4
5 Greek ministry for culture has brought the symbolic value of the Marbles to the fore,
6
7 elevated the debate to a national political level and inaugurated a new era of national
8
9 narratives. Clearly, this takes on particular significance in the current socio-economic
10
11 context.
12

Heritage as emblem of the Nation

13
14
15
16
17
18
19 Nostalgias and national fantasies unravel the process of defining the 'ownership of the
20
21 past' and provide the ideological and value-based singularisation of heritage (e.g.
22
23 construing the Parthenon Marbles as individual and unique), which contributes to
24
25 national narratives. This metanarrative of nationalism has always worked as the
26
27 'ideology of belongingness' (Hall 1995:185) and functions as an identification
28
29 mechanism in the discursive construction of national (collective/individual) identities,
30
31 which are now, however, recontextualised to accommodate and sustain a globalised
32
33 neoliberal late capitalist environment (Wodak et al. 2009). The constant fantasising of
34
35 *self* and *other* or *self* and *self* (construction of self-identification) alternates within the
36
37 discursive process, giving and taking space, resetting the conversational arena and its
38
39 notional boundaries. In this context, heritage becomes the compass between present
40
41 and past and serves as a tool to restore lost or subverted values (Hall 2002; Lowenthal
42
43 1988): 'heritage displays inevitably recontextualise the past within the demands and
44
45 priorities of the present' (Coupland and Coupland 2014: 503). These context bound
46
47 trajectories are well reflected in the foundingmyths across different periods around the
48
49 Parthenon Marbles (see figure 1 and socio-historic overview).
50
51
52

53
54
55 The notion of capital (economic, social, political) in Bourdieu's terms serves as a
56
57 substratum embedded among the various imagined values attributed to the Parthenon
58
59
60

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13

1
2
3 Marbles over the years: whether as the catalyst in the micro-politics between city-
4
5 states in ancient Greece; or the artistic value attributed to them as items of classical
6
7 antiquity; or their economic value as the bailout resource for Elgin's debts, as
8
9 Hamilakis (2010[1999]) argues - employing the cultural biographical approach.
10
11
12 Graham et al. (2000:17) posit that

14
15 [t]he worth attributed to these artefacts rests less in their intrinsic merit than in a
16
17 complex array of contemporary values, demands and even moralities.
18
19

20
21 Heritage as a resource of discursive identity attribution, as in the case of the data
22
23 presented below, entails a significant element of locality. A common 'tradition' and a
24
25 clearly defined territory become foundations for a collective fantasy of 'organic
26
27 solidarity', as the recent depictions of Greek pride with respect to the Greek crisis
28
29 demonstrate (Leontis 1995). Place is bound to co-constructed myths and national
30
31 narratives and (collective) memory; naturalised indexicalities between people and
32
33 place. These heterotopic loci construct the imagined territory of Hellenism and make
34
35 the Parthenon Marbles one of its most significant landmarks^{vii}. Evidently then, in the
36
37 current context of the crisis, heritage discourses become intertwined in constructing
38
39 new narratives of national pride.
40
41

42
43 Hence, in the *Guardian* environment, the interactants revisit and recontextualise
44
45 the issue within its recent socio-historical biography. Drawing on the, arguably pro-
46
47 return, content of the journalistic article, they negotiate the quantification of the value
48
49 of the marbles, construct (ahistorical) national imaginaries and introduce trade off
50
51 scenarios. By adopting a DHA/IS approach we are able to explore the ways in which
52
53 users put forward pro-/anti-return arguments and make the financial crisis relevant in
54
55 the argumentation process.
56
57
58
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60

Context, Method, Data

The posts analysed here are drawn from the comments responding to one article published on the 11th February 2014, co-authored by the *Guardian*'s arts correspondent, Mark Brown, and the official correspondent in Greece, Helena Smith. An international English-speaking medium was chosen as it provides an insight into the stances of users who self-identify as Greeks, as well as others more or less affected by the European debt crisis (e.g. Angouri and Wodak 2014). The article selected was one of two attracting the highest number of comments and the only one providing a historic overview of the Parthenon sculptures debate and references to the current socioeconomic context. We consider this a fertile ground for the users to (dis)align and justify/negotiate alternative positions. This is further accentuated by the *Guardian* context; often seen as targeting 'left-of-centre, politically engaged intellectual[s]' (Singer and Ashman 2009: 17).^{viii}

The article is structured around three core themes: the comments of the 'Monuments Men' cast -including direct quotes; the reactions of key stakeholders/government figures in Greece and Britain -including direct quotes; the historical context and references to the current situation in Greece. This structure covers both sides of the story but allows for ambiguity which affords different readings and a possible pro- return position. Note for instance: 'The actors joined a dispute which has simmered ever since *enormous* chunks [emphasis added] of the Parthenon's statuary were *removed by Lord Elgin* [emphasis added] (...)'; or with reference to the British Museum 'But at the British Museum there was *little sign* of policy change. A spokeswoman said everyone was entitled to their *view*.' And in closing: 'The museum has *about half* of the *remaining* marbles'; 'Athens having got the others, although *fragments* exist in collections such as the Louvre'. 'In 2009,

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1
2
3 *before the crash*, Greece opened its *New Acropolis Museum*.’ Juxtaposing two sides
4
5 of a story is one of the most common argumentative schemes (Wodak 2016) and
6
7 outside our interest here. Rather, what is of interest is how the article is deconstructed
8
9 and referred to by users in their postings. The historical context and the value of the
10
11 sculptures are hotly debated, together with the ethos (in an Aristotelian sense) of the
12
13 cast and their statements.
14

15
16 Readers of the article were quick to respond and the first thread was posted at
17
18 20:56 on the same day and the last 3 days later. It was posted shortly after the film’s
19
20 press conference and was followed by a spate of comments in a short period (947 in 4
21
22 days), resulting in the quick fire pace of the ensuing interactions. The data was coded
23
24 following a detailed thematic analysis approach. Table 1 provides an overview of
25
26 some basic descriptive data.
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INSERT TABLE 1. ABOUT HERE

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34 In this paper we draw on our earlier work and elaborate further on our combining
35
36 DHA with a focus on the micro analysis of interaction from an IS perspective. IS is
37
38 typically associated with the legacy of John Gumperz and the analysis of spoken
39
40 interaction; however its insights and tools are eminently useful in analysing other
41
42 semiotic modes, such as Computer Mediated Discourse. IS shares with Conversation
43
44 Analysis (CA) an emphasis on the detailed analysis of interaction, typically using CA
45
46 conventions for representing talk in writing. IS, unlike CA, however, is interested in
47
48 the relationship between the *situated here and now* and the wider socio-cultural
49
50 context^{ix}. IS is rarely used for addressing issues pertinent to the wider socio-political
51
52 context; a limitation our approach addresses.
53
54
55

56 Accordingly, a combined DHA/IS approach (Angouri and Wodak 2014; in prep)
57
58 allows us to analyse discourse on two levels: the interactional organisation of the
59
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1
2
3 debate, how the users mobilise and structure pro-/return-positions (micro), as well as
4
5 the actual arguments they draw on (macro).
6

7
8 More specifically, throughout the debate the interactants employ a series of
9
10 argumentative schemes in the negotiation process. Specific argumentative schemes
11
12 such as topoi are context dependent and are frequently employed in socio-historical
13
14 and political debates where blaming, denying and positioning are salient (Wodak
15
16 2015; Boukala 2016; Amossy 2002). An IS informed approach provides the tools for
17
18 capturing how multiple, and often conflicting, positions are locally negotiated
19
20 between the users and shared meanings are positioned within the broader socio-
21
22 political context. These shared meanings are mobilised through ‘contextualisation
23
24 cues’, a core concept in IS referring to any feature (linguistic or semiotic) which the
25
26 interactants recognise as carrying specific meaning/s in their local contexts. IS can
27
28 then offer an insight into the micro-dynamics of interaction and can complement the
29
30 argumentation analysis.
31
32

33
34 DHA draws on the concept of topos when appropriate^x. Kienpointner (2011: 265)
35
36 defines topoi as ‘search formulas which tell you how and where to look for
37
38 arguments’. Rubinelli (2009: 13) suggests that topoi are strategies of argumentation
39
40 for gaining the upper hand and producing successful speeches. Topoi can be made
41
42 explicit as conditional or causal paraphrases such as ‘if x, then y’ or ‘y, because x’
43
44 (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 69-80) and function as warrants that guarantee the
45
46 transition from argument to conclusion, we illustrate this in the case of the
47
48 argumentation below.
49
50

51
52 Wengeler (2003) emphasises a content- and context-specific definition of topoi as
53
54 this allows deconstructing presupposed and frequently fallacious prejudices
55
56 embedded in everyday common-sense conversations about specific topics. The notion
57
58 of common sense (or everyday) argumentation is salient in our case as we focus on
59
60

1
2
3 the ways in which lay users draw on assumed shared positions for taking/projecting a
4
5 stance. Topoi are not necessarily fallacious; many examples below manifest flawed
6
7 logic, but in particular contexts, arguments using a specific topos can be convincing:
8
9 Topoi are then – neutrally speaking – a useful shortcut appealing to existing
10
11 knowledge.
12

13
14 For the purposes of this paper, we look into the most salient topoi the users
15
16 mobilise, the ways in which they index dis/alignment with the positions taken by
17
18 other users and connect to the broader socio-political environment.
19

20
21 At the heart of the debate is the pro-/anti-return position which is enacted in
22
23 relation to ownership rights, national/heritage narratives and crisis blaming. The
24
25 dataset is replete with manifestations of ideological and a/historical stance-taking cues
26
27 and regular users quickly divide into ideological camps that last the life of the forum.
28
29 We are particularly interested in how participants handle the projection/allocation of
30
31 accusations/ justifications for their stances^{xi} (and that of their interlocutors). The
32
33 sections below draw on excerpts from 17 users, amongst the most active in the debate
34
35 as the number and frequency of posts indicates. We discuss our findings starting from
36
37 issues of ownership negotiation, we then move to the strategies used for doing
38
39 national identity and heritage talk and conclude with the re-enactment of the ongoing
40
41 financial crisis.
42
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44
45

46 **Who is the owner after all?**

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48
49
50 **INSERT FIGURE 2. ABOUT HERE**

51
52
53 The main axis of ideological positioning, as emerging through the data, is built around
54
55 the allocation of ownership, justified and legitimised by specific argumentative
56
57 schemes and topoi. Throughout the threads, commentators are called to explicitly
58
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60

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claim membership in the pro- or against- ideological camps and stance-taking on the issue of belonging becomes a self-categorisation mechanism (Bamberg et al. 2011). Figure 2 is a simplified representation of the key positions the interactants take in the threads. Ancient and modern Greece are constructed as a linear succession order which is mobilised in relationship to four abstract owners: ‘Greece’, the ‘UK’, ‘Europe’ and the ‘World’. The most common are the Greeks (21 users out of 55 who take an explicit position), the British (11/55) and the World (10/55).

The debate resolves into two camps: the against-return group, which attributes the ownership of the marbles to the British Museum or to Britain (abstract) and is built around the act of purchase and the importance of continuous possession and safekeeping. The marbles become a commodity with a specific economic price, which is then employed to legitimise the claim. This group draws heavily on the topoi of value and legality- *‘if the British Museum acquired the sculptures legally, paid the suggested price and keeps them safe, they belong to them’*. The second camp emanates from the pro-return group and ownership is attributed to the Greek people/state/nation basing the claim on the constructed Greek national identity through taken for granted linear affiliations between ancient and modern Greece.

The topos of history gets foregrounded here-*‘if this belonged to Greece from antiquity, it is part of Greek history/national identity, it belongs to Greece now as well’*.

Both camps draw on the topos rights: *‘if X [the law and/or history] is on our side, then it is rightfully ours’* and mobilise the topoi of time and space *‘if this was taken from Greece (geo-political position) in 1816, then it belongs to Greece’ OR ‘if this resides in the British Museum/Britain since 1816, then it belongs to British Museum/Britain’*. The topos of time indexes the exact time of removal or other core

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19

1
2
3 incidents mobilised in the debate and the topos of space positions Greece/Britain's
4
5 geopolitical space as the locus of the marbles.
6

7 This debate thus triggers the emergence of constructs of national narratives and
8
9 related ideologies that work as sense making tools and membership categorisation
10
11 devices in the pro- or against- ideological camps. 'Us and them' discourses reveal the
12
13 general urge for positioning into one of the two main ideological groups, and in turn
14
15 construct a frame for the users to delineate their stance on the issue. Following from
16
17 the discussion of the wider context we now take a closer look at the debate starting
18
19 with Excerpt 1.
20
21
22
23

Ownership: purchase rights

24
25
26
27
28 Although the Greek government discourse places less emphasis on the argument of
29
30 'ownership', this issue is explicitly debated in 55 posts in the data.
31

32 To set the scene, starting with the against-return group, the users' positions are
33
34 often made explicit as in excerpt one where 'Wiseaftertheevent' initiates a No-
35
36 prefaced post, structured as an elliptical clause followed by a full stop. Disagreement
37
38 studies (e.g. Angouri and Locher 2012) often show a preference towards indirect
39
40 disagreement/agreement; other work has associated agreement with positive concepts
41
42 such as harmony and avoiding loss of face in interaction. Although this position is
43
44 still being debated, disagreement has been largely associated with conflict (e.g.
45
46 Angouri 2012). The position we take here is that context specific factors and the
47
48 norms of different communities are critical in both identifying a sequence as
49
50 disagreement and evaluating it as markedly positive or negative. At the same time
51
52 yes/no are explicit markers of stance (e.g. Clift 2006) and the user takes a position in
53
54 constructing ownership which then becomes a resource for presenting the pro-/anti-
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1
2
3 return position in an epistemically robust way and in relation to positively marked
4
5 values such as returning to the ‘rightful’ owners (with the adjective being used in 21
6
7 posts).

8
9 Further to this, ownership discourses set the contextual platform for the claims that
10 follow in the thread: purchase is a legal guarantor of ownership. The signifier
11
12 ‘acquired legally’ enacts the discursive normalisation of the act of trading cultural
13
14 artefacts and deduces the commodification of heritage (embedded in ‘fair price’) to a
15
16 common sense phenomenon. The second half of the utterance is substantiated on the
17
18 topoi of *threat* and deploys an imagined scenario of destruction, without however any
19
20 finger-pointing at its causal agent – probably Greece is insinuated here – and thus the
21
22 acquisition is justified as an unavoidable necessary evil. The user next aims to abate
23
24 the exceptionality of the debate by using the fallacy of equation (equating unequal
25
26 phenomena and events) by constructing an unreal /counterfactual scenario (shifting
27
28 the case to America and consequently to the whole world). Indeed, 20 occurrences
29
30 use the same analogy and another 13 include strong anti-American claims, which
31
32 relate to the context of the *Guardian* article and Matt Damon and Bill Murray’s
33
34 comments reacting to the suggestion that being American means being ignorant.
35
36
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40

INSERT EXCERPT 1. ABOUT HERE

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43
44
45 In the response ‘Theo Jan’ rejects this argument. The interrogative, ‘did you say’
46
47 (line 9), is very skilfully used to weaken the earlier position (Heritage and Raymond
48
49 2005) as a pseudo-request for confirmation which ‘Theo Jan’ addresses by offering a
50
51 different token of ownership; the juxtaposition of ‘sacred’/‘Thieves’ and the intricate
52
53 argumentation about ‘paying the thief who paid the thief’ adds to the value judgment
54
55 of the position enacted here. Ownership is granted explicitly (‘Greek monument’)
56
57 and ‘sacred’ signifies linear affiliations with ancient Greece and the narrative of
58
59
60

Greece's past. The construction of self ('Greek') is built on the otherisation of the 'Thieves' Turks, who in this case become the agent of blame as being the first thieves in exchange of the victimised Greeks. A fallacious past is constructed which seems to build a teleological continuity from ancient Greece the current Greek EU member state while neglecting all other relevant periods and upheavals in European history.

Ownership: historical rights - modern and ancient Greece continuum and the construction of national identity

21 occurrences within the pro-return group attribute the ownership of the marbles to the abstract *agents of Greeks/Greece* and proclaim them as 'rightful owners'. This argument draws on the situated co-construction of a *Greek national identity* based on a single Greek culture as a continuum that spans ancient and modern Greece and, consequently, attributes rights of ownership to the people of the nation. These socio-cultural affiliations are, evidently, built on an imagined linear trajectory of communities that are defined differently by different people. Excerpt 2 is an illustration of this discourse where the 'people of Greece' are constructed as a homogenous whole with a collective past and a common historical trajectory.

INSERT EXCERPT 2. ABOUT HERE

Recreations of *a-historicalnational narratives* around the 'imagined territory of Hellenism' work as *agents of ownership*. Excerpt 3 provides a fuller illustration of the intertwined discourses. Throughout the postings, the interactants index the topoi of *history, time and space*. Line 3 situates the issue in the socio-historical era of the Ottoman Empire and the use of past tense 'were' positions the issue in the past. The repetition of *own* (trope of *pleonasm*) in 'Theo Jan's' posting is chosen to emphasise

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1
2
3 the claim. The user draws on narration and unfolds a fallacious *sylllogism* which is
4
5 built on *factualisations*, so as to make the *pseudo-rational causal conclusion* that
6
7 ‘Britain is also a thief in a line of pillagers’ (Ochs and Capps 2001). The use of
8
9 affirmative sentences indexes the position taken as an undisputable fact while the ‘so’
10
11 prefaced utterance (line 4) is strategically used to summarise and come to a
12
13 concluding statement. ‘So’ prefaced turns have been associated with doing power in
14
15 interaction (e.g. Holmes and Stubbe 2003) and the user here attempts to control the
16
17 floor. The subordinated clause helps to further unravel the *sylllogism*. Lines 3-6 are
18
19 indicative of how the topos of *history* becomes a compass in argumentation: a
20
21 historicised narration navigates the argument through time (‘after so many years’, line
22
23 6) (Forchtner 2014). The use of mitigation (‘I am afraid’) and the *irony* employed in
24
25 the last utterance constitute a direct challenge interpreted as such by
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‘SumerianThunderbox’ as the response shows.

INSERT EXCERPT 3. ABOUT HERE

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‘SumerianThunderbox’’s response aims to reject the claim by countering a
different but relevant argument which challenges the linearity between modern and
ancient Greece. It also challenges the epistemic authority of the user by questioning
the accuracy of the claims. The use of direct questions directly challenge ‘Theo Jan’’s
face and this reaches a peak with lines 12-13 positioning ‘Theo Jan’ as uninformed in
a direct attack. As it is common in all the threads, direct face attacks (*argumentum ad
hominem*) are employed to challenge the arguments put forward. Although the
overall style of the users leans to the formal end of the spectrum, as shown by
attention to orthography, relatively sparse use of features that are common in popular
social media platforms and careful use of persuasive strategies in argument structure,
personal face attack is still noted in the disagreement sequences analysed.

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23

1
2
3 In the response ‘Theo Jan’ employs a *historicised narrative* and constructs a
4 homogeneous monolithic representation of the *Greeks* drawing on the same
5 language>same customs>same religion continuum. The linking point between the
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ancient and the modern is the locality (‘known as Greece’): the imagined territory of Hellenism (*Megali idea*) (Clogg 1988). The construction of the *idealised* profile continues, and the claim is presented as the unequivocal common sense truth (‘I guess you know it all’). The quote ends with a *relativisation* (trope of analogy) between ancient Greek states and modern UK, aiming to accommodate to the interactional context and the interlocutor. The homogeneity of *Greece* is constructed on the basis of language, culture and customs (line 18, 19) as well as religion and geographical location (lines 19, 20, 21) which is related to the modern state also through a comparison of the UK in WWII (topoi of *history, time* and *space*). The posts in the threads are quite long which provides the space to the users to develop their arguments. Despite the fact that the blog provides an asynchronous context, the quick succession of the messages (see lines 1, 11, 19), is closer to the immediacy of spoken interaction and contributes to the tone of the disagreement. The sequence between ancient and modern times and people is directly related to the construction of ownership. This serves as a resource for the construction of in and out groups in a blame game that distinguishes between victims (e.g. the rightful owners) and perpetrators (e.g. the thieves or, for the other camp, those who make false accusations).

Overall, identity negotiation and co-construction is an ongoing process which allows interlocutors to position themselves within specific groups which are associated with ‘ownership rights’. This identity work allows the interactants to claim membership of the emerging ideological groups; the navigation ‘between uniqueness and a communal sense of belonging and being the same as others’ (Bamberg et al.

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2011: 177). The choices of topics to narrate and the attribution of characteristics may contain membership attribution through a self-identification (integration)/differentiation processes, in-group recognition/rejection and external categorisation by the out-group. However, the perception of identity does not necessarily coincide with the categorisation ascribed to the individual by the in-group or the out-group (Bamberg et al. 2011; Phinney et al. 2001). Identity construction becomes a ‘multi way’ process through which the individuals negotiate positions claimed by themselves and those projected upon them by others individually and the group collectively. This process is based on imaginaries of characteristics that distinguish *Self* and *Other* (Reisigl and Wodak 2001). As with the discursive strategies employed in the positive construction of self/ in-group, the negative construction of the Other also works as a mechanism of membership categorisation, which in its turn becomes a resource for argumentative positioning (Ameli & Merali 2006).

INSERT EXCERPT 4. ABOUT HERE

Excerpt (4) responds to an accusation that ‘young people in Britain’ do not know Greece’s contribution to ‘Western civilisation’. The user re-claims the floor and with a marker ‘oh’ indicating exclamation and imitating a means of disagreement in spoken interaction, aims to counter-attack the accusations and dominate the disagreement sequence. By introducing a third person narrative, the user aims to distance the post from a direct face attack and successfully builds a different, contemporary and negative narrative/profile for Greece(Howarth et al. 2000).The last utterance shows consistency in the communicative strategy, as the topos of *definition* – how is Greece defined – differently than what ‘Theo Jan’ suggests. A switch is noted here to the current EU hegemonic narrative about Greece and many fallacious

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1
2
3 hasty generalisations. This position, however, is resisted strongly in the pro-return
4
5 camp which mobilises colonisation history in response to attacks such as the one in
6
7 Excerpt 4. Excerpt 5 is a good example of this, which presents the return of the
8
9 marbles as a moral duty. In 5, *irony* is employed though the marked use of the
10
11 adjective *progressive* and the colloquial use of ‘Brits’ portrayed as *enduring*
12
13 *colonialists*. As in the case of ancient/modern Greece, past and present are also
14
15 directly juxtaposed in the case of the British Empire. In this way, the topos of *history*
16
17 employed by ‘Theo Jan’ is challenged.
18
19

20
21 Discourses of ownership of the marbles become discourses of heritage where the
22
23 people of Greece are presented in either positive (typically in association with a
24
25 glorious past) or negative (typically in a stereotypical manner of having misused
26
27 public funding) light. This is discursively constructed in the duality of ‘us’ and
28
29 ‘them’: the *mitigation* of the in-group acts (that one time) and the essentialisation of
30
31 Other through a *fallacy* of *hasty generalisations* that reproduce stereotypical
32
33 constructs about *Greece/Greeks* and ‘function as characteristic moves in negative
34
35 portrayal strategies’ (Van Dijk 1984: 73).
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37
38

INSERT EXCERPT 5. ABOUT HERE

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42
43 As the two camps further develop binary positions, arguments of trade off emerge
44
45 and are offered as a solution/closure of the issue. We discuss below three common
46
47 trade off positions which draw on the topos of *burden* according to which: ‘*If a*
48
49 *country is burdened (by e.g. debt), this should be acted upon to reduce the burden*’
50
51 and the topos of *value* whereby the sculptures are associated *value measured in*
52
53 *monetary terms*.
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Arguing about values

The topoi of *burden/value* take various guises in the dataset including the economic value of the marbles, a symbolic value, an economic value of the Greek crisis or the moral value of the arguments. Value is directly indexed through the sold/stolen/bought marbles, the act of theft/looted and the legal /illegal moral value of the act. Abstract constructs, such as ‘cultural heritage’ and ‘historical monuments’, become agents of value through a process of commodification, which is embedded and enacted within discursive negotiations of trade off (Appadurai 1986). We focus below on three common ones enacted in the data where a ‘deal’ is proposed.

Trade off 1: Greece owes to the British museum for protecting the marbles

The *imagined debt* ‘Greece owes to the British museum/people’ is a popular resource (with 29 postings drawing on it) for building this common ‘trade off’. Excerpts 6 and 6.1 demonstrate these discourses.

The users seek to attribute economic *value* to the preservation and maintenance of the marbles. In Excerpt 6 the two interrogative statements allow the users to position themselves against the return -assuming that a condition for the return is to ‘settle’ the matter and pay each other back. Direct questions are frequently used in direct disagreement and face attack (e.g. ‘steveips’ in excerpt 6 uses them as a rhetorical device).

The ‘payoff’, topos of *value*, is then rejected upon a historical re-contextualisation that breaks the link between the present and the past. Although the recipients of the ‘money’ are mostly abstract in the dataset -and- indexed under Britain/Brits/British people or Greece/Greek people- this is challenged here in every line of the posting building upon the discontinuity of the marbles’ owners and the modern Greek state.

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27

INSERT EXCERPT 6. ABOUT HERE

Addressing the issue from a different angle, in Excerpt 6.1, the user proclaims a pro-return stance but, in a strategically ambiguous post, the user constructs the glorification of UK's contribution in the preservation of the marbles (*excruciating; saving them*-note the topos of *history* here) while at the same time questions the position by referring to the whitening of the marbles in the 30s that attracted wide criticism and is still used to weaken the position constructing the British museum as the key agent for *protecting* the marbles (www.britishmuseum.org). The post also includes an element of 'trade off' ('quits') embedded in humour that works as a mitigating disclaimer for the defacing claims.

INSERT EXCERPT 6.1 ABOUT HERE

Moving to the counter position, the 'existential debt' *Europe* owes to *Greece* is constructed as the basis of a deal of return which needs to be done in order to reaffirm the moral order.

Trade off 2: The world owes Greece for its contribution to world heritage

The counter-argument within the pro-return group attributes *cultural and historical* supremacy to Greece and eulogises its contribution to world heritage. The ideological core of the argument, as Hamilakis (2010[1999]: 313) describes, is 'to remind the West of its 'debt' to Hellenic heritage'. National narratives of imagined situated 'Hellenic' identities are prominent in the sample and the topos of *history* becomes once again evident in the data. The excerpts below illustrate this position. The user in Excerpt 7 portrays their argument as the only truth (we all know), employing the topos of *definition*. The claim is framed so as to provoke emotional connotations

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1
2
3 ('deep down') and 3 examples are employed to substantiate its validity and construct
4
5 a topos of *threat*: the museums would shut down if it wasn't for the stolen (line 5)
6
7 artefacts. The superiority of Greek museums is constructed through the same
8
9 argument.
10

INSERT EXCERPT 7. ABOUT HERE

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14
15
16 Similarly, in Excerpt 7.1 'we all acknowledge' embeds the unequivocal
17
18 factualisation of Greece's contribution to global civilisation. The use of 'we'
19
20 contributes to claiming a collective stance here. However, the user does not take sides
21
22 on the pro/anti return debate here but suggests the marbles *belong* to the 'world'
23
24 which implies that both positions are wrong and dissociates the issue from the
25
26 Greek/British ownership in an attempt to establish consensus.
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28
29

INSERT EXCERPT 7.1 ABOUT HERE

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34 Finally, in 7.2 the topos of *knowledge* is expressed through *given* and *invented* and
35
36 is enacted with the trope of *sylogism* (given A is true...then B is true), the latter
37
38 crystallises the idea of 'cultural debt' and is prevailing in similar discourses (Greeks
39
40 invented democracy etc.) although it can also be a causal ironic argument-*if one has*
41
42 *invented rhetoric, one must be right/good at it.*
43
44
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INSERT EXCERPT 7.2. ABOUT HERE

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48
49 Ancient Greece's contribution to the philosophy of science and world knowledge
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51 constitute a dominant discourse in the construction of the national identity of the
52
53 modern Greek state as well as the construction of Philhellenism in modern times. In
54
55 the data the users draw on this narrative in constructing their own position of the
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3 value of the cultural capital. This however is not related only to the distant past as the
4
5 next section shows.
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8 **Trade-off 3: Greece owes the EU for the bailout**

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11 The last category of ‘trade off’ argumentation comprises arguments that re-
12 contextualise the debate in relation to the current socio-economic circumstances: the
13 Greek financial crisis. The ideological frame is built around the notion of *debt* and
14 blame for the crisis. The argument works in a similar way to the rest of the ‘trade off’
15 claims: the financial debt is traded for the commodified marbles.
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23 In excerpt 8, the user closes their posting by associating the widely discussed
24 Greek ‘bail out’ with ownership of the marbles. As in other cases discussed earlier,
25 the claim is portrayed as taken-for-granted knowledge, post hoc fallacy and discursive
26 power dynamics underlie this : ‘the money that the German taxpayers’ (construction
27 of positive stereotype: ‘well off’) is contrasted to the poor and helpless Greece that
28 needs to be fed (‘fork over’) (Laclau and Mouffe (2001 [1985])). A different locality is
29 proposed to house the marbles then, symbolising ownership through current debt.
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39 **INSERT EXCERPT 8. ABOUT HERE**

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43 From a similar angle, other users attribute ownership to Britain on the basis of the
44 current contribution to the EU in general and Greece in particular. This is clear in 8.1.
45 where ownership of the new Acropolis museum is attributed to the British financial
46 institutions and the British working people (line 10). The ‘British tax-payer’ becomes
47 the bearer of all financial burdens, both of the museum and the Greek banks.
48
49 Indirectly the relationship between Britain and the EU is also constructed in this
50 posting; Britain contributes what seems to be a large chunk of funding which the EU
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**DISCOURSES OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN TIMES OF CRISIS – THE CASE OF
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handles and which in this case was directed to the Acropolis museum. This position is constructed as evidence for the prior claim.

INSERT EXCERPT 8.1 ABOUT HERE

These discourses, however, are also challenged in the debate as 8.2 illustrates. ‘Chrysts’ questions the spatiotemporal implications of equating the current crisis with the marbles, hence challenging the topos of *history*. Already in line 3 the user addresses the forum and criticises the key arguments as being based on *unverified factualisations* concluding ‘that most comments in favour of the British’ refer to the current crisis. The post goes even further and compares the financial situation in Greece to the troubles of the British economy (comparing incomparable phenomena-a fallacy). The post skilfully moves beyond the description of the current socio-economic status quo and questions the role of the British museum (protecting/damaging the marbles vs. making profit). The user distances ‘self’ from ‘them’ (them; theirs; the Greeks; the British) and presents the position as one that (‘should be’) commonly accepted (‘let’s be honest’) in order to substantiate the importance of the Greek marbles to the British museum. The last utterance which refers to profit, contradicts with previous statement that ‘the issue is [...] nor an economic one’. This post echoes the stance discussed earlier (excerpt 8) and recontextualises the monetary value.

INSERT EXCERPT 8.2 ABOUT HERE

To close the discussion of the findings, the analysis shows how discourses of heritage are mobilised in the sense making process the users of the forum put forward. In taking two opposing positions, the users here construct heritage through

1
2
3 commodifying both the marbles and the past and present socio-economic and political
4
5 context. We revisit some of the key issues in the next and final section of the paper.
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7

8 9 **Concluding remarks**

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12 This article has attempted to look into the complex nexus of value relationships which
13
14 emerge through the discursive re-contextualisation and negotiation of the return of the
15
16 Parthenon Marbles in the current political and economic context. Commentators co-
17
18 construct cultural heritage in the micro-contextual environment of the *Guardian*
19
20 domain and relate the debate to the broader socio-political context in 2014
21
22 (Greece/Britain, the Greek crisis). We have shown that the basic argumentative axis is
23
24 built around the attribution of *ownership* to the marbles and is (being) negotiated on
25
26 various levels of ideological positioning: the topoi of *legality* and *rights* are employed
27
28 to introduce the respective agents of ownership, substantiated by a range of identity
29
30 narratives and narratives of the past (topos of *history*). We also looked at discourses
31
32 of trade off that emerge upon the new setting of the crisis: the topoi of *burden* and
33
34 *value* are mobilised throughout the dataset on the one hand as a quantifying agent for
35
36 the marbles and on the other as a qualitative signifier of the immense Hellenic
37
38 heritage. Both positions and related arguments bring the debate to the contemporary
39
40 era and capitalist economy. Heller and Duchene (2016: 142 drawing on Appadurai)
41
42 argue that ‘capitalism can potentially commodify pretty much anything’. This is well
43
44 represented in the data.
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48

49
50 Going back to the notion of heritage, the analysis sought to capture the complexity
51
52 of its definitions and recontextualisations throughout the dataset. Figure 3 summarises
53
54 the most common signifiers of heritage in the paper. Some of the commentators refer
55
56 to art and artefacts, archaeological sites and monuments or classical archaeology
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DISCOURSES OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN TIMES OF CRISIS – THE CASE OF PARTHENON MARBLES 32

(11/32 in total). Despite being an abstract notion, heritage is most frequently used (17/32 occurrences) as a rather monolithically defined and linear concept. It seems to strongly index ownership and belonging, often identified with nation/nationality, where the latter is conceived based on the current modern (official) division of nations (Greeks, British etc.) but is also stretched along the spectrum of historicised imaginaries with respect to its diachronic longevity.

INSERT FIGURE 3. ABOUT HERE

The multiple references to nation in the context of the data demonstrates the extent to which contextual factors become fundamentally influential elements in the discursive co-construction of abstract entities at specific periods in time. As opposed to ‘national heritage’ some commentators use the term ‘world heritage’ as a way of rejecting one-dimensional ownership claims, but still projecting (abstract) belongingness/ownership to the ‘world’. In both cases commentators attribute historical affiliations and values to heritage, what Munasinghe (2005: 253) describes as ‘discursive information on historic notions and action’.

The debate around the marbles has been revisited throughout its birth and rebirth in a plethora of settings, revealing its persistence in time and the recurrent value of the arguments and its unique *social biography* (Hamilakis 2010 [1999]). Evidence of the ongoing re-contextualisation is the emergent theme of the Greek crisis since mid-late 2000s. The saliency of the ‘crisis element’ has gradually transformed from an ephemeral rather transitory situation to a prolonged and rooted *status quo*, reflected both in domestic (Greece) everyday discourses and in external representations of the phenomena, which has led to the politicisation of everyday and official as well as media discourses. This taken-for-granted construct of the Greek crisis, and consequently of a newly defined Greek identity, has been used not only in discussions

1
2
3 around the crisis per se but as a co-related factor in various topics, as in the case of the
4
5 Parthenon Marbles. Discourses of crisis and discourses of cultural heritage become
6
7 blurred and negotiated in the public sphere, whether that comprises the official agenda
8
9 of the government, the negotiation of the debate within the media or in online
10
11 environments. The online space demonstrates the transient nature of discourse and its
12
13 context-based principle.
14

15
16 To conclude, this paper did not aim to provide answers or to exhaust the debates
17
18 mobilised in the Parthenon Marbles case. We have contributed, however, to the body
19
20 of work that problematises the way these notions are negotiated in interaction and the
21
22 sense making process as negotiated in different contexts responding to and picking up
23
24 various positions put forth in the media. Further to this, by drawing on the online
25
26 environment, we align with those who make a case for more research on the internet
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28 as a zone for political interaction (see also in Wodak and Angouri 2014).
29
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31
32 We have also proposed the theoretical and analytical DHA/IS approach which
33
34 allows linking the macro/micro contexts and the accessing of the multiple layers of
35
36 meaning. Given the complexity of the questions critical studies seek to address,
37
38 drawing on complementary theoretical approaches and methodologies allows for a
39
40 more systematic and robust multi-level analysis and holistic approach of the topic.
41
42 The DHA/IS approach allows to look into the way argumentative schemes work in
43
44 situ and the key positions the interactants negotiate.
45
46

47
48 The notion of heritage and the multiple meanings it affords in political debates
49
50 require further research by critical scholars in general, and sociolinguists in particular.
51
52 As societies evolve towards the de/re-territorialisation of nationality and ethnicity
53
54 (Wodak 2015), the reactions to the debate obtain a new contextual basis; a new
55
56 globalised prism that entails both imagined local, global, and virtual heterotopias.
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58 Such reactions will generate the need for new studies into discourses of heritage, as in
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34

the debate about the Parthenon Marbles and its ongoing conceptual re-
 contextualisations.

ⁱWe would like to thank the editors and anonymous reviews for the constructive feedback on earlier drafts of the paper. We are also grateful to Janet Holmes and Kate Beeching for their comments and to Mik Smith for his careful reading. The first author is indebted to Kostantinos Pyrzas for the long conversations on the Greek national narratives.

ⁱⁱWe acknowledge that those who interact online in any given environment have had access to a certain level of digital literacy, have access to internet and select to use the medium for this purpose. This however is not considered a limitation for our project.

ⁱⁱⁱSimilar but not completely comparable debates have characterised some aspects of the huge and complex restitution agenda regarding Aryanized Austrian and German Jewish properties, housing and art by the Nazi regime during World War II. The recent film 'The Woman in Gold' (directed by Simon Curtis for BBC, Thorpe, 2015) has aptly covered some of these dimensions while focusing on a famous painting by Klimt ('Adele'). In this case, the Austrian government claimed that the famous painting was part and parcel of the Austrian cultural heritage and identity and adamantly tried to retain the painting in the Leopold Museum in Vienna.

^{iv}We use every-day political discourse here in referring to debates by people in public who do not claim a relevant professional or expert identity (e.g. parliamentarians) but which address issues related to topics, events, institutions or campaigns related to political actions, actors or systems. The term is often used to designate a focus on power and inequality in language use.

^vThe term should not be confused with the process of commoditisation, which refers to the downgrading of product/object market value into a mere commodity (Rushkoff, 2005).

^{vi}i.e. Peter Economides - Rebranding Greece - YouTube

^{vii}Coming out as a product of the creation of European Independent Nations with specific borders, with minor territorial variations, place becomes 'both an input and an output of the process of heritage creation' (Graham et al, 2000:4; On the commodification of place and heritage see e.g. Shuang, 2012).

^{viii}Other social media environments, e.g., tabloid press or other conservative platforms, could arguably provide access to more explicit nationalist discourses and heated debates. This is not of interest here on two grounds: a) we are interested in the more nuanced positioning and argumentation strategies and b) we prioritised popular domains and selected articles that attracted near 1000 postings. This resulted in two articles and the one chosen here was deemed the most suitable on the criteria discussed in the text.

^{ix}Although IS and CA have been perceived (and still are by many) as distinctive and separate, a case can be made for the two coming closer in analyzing the relationship between the interactional order and societal power structures.

^xThe kind of persuasive and rhetorical means that can be used depends on topic, genre and audience orientation, as well as intention; these factors are instrumental in determining the argumentation schemes which seem most adequate and appropriate. Thus, in the concrete analysis, it will sometimes be Toulmin's model (2003), sometimes Walton's practical reasoning, and sometimes van Eemeren's Pragma-dialectics which make the best sense (see Walton 1996).

^{xi}We use the term 'stance' here to refer to how the users dis/align with the others in the pro/anti return debate and with the position taken by the article itself. We do not see IS and Stance Analysis (see e.g. Jaffe, 2009) as necessarily correlated, the latter has a closer association with the variationist tradition. Overall, the relationship between different theoretical frameworks should be viewed as a matter of definition more than anything else. For instance cues for Jaffe (2009) are the 'basic, culturally specific tools for stance taking' (2009:10). From this perspective then, it is possible to see the two approaches as intertwined. A further discussion however goes beyond the scope of this paper.

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APPENDICES

Tables

Total number of comments:	947
Total number of threads:	312
Total number of commentators:	377
Pro return (total):	96/377
Pro return (openly stated):	86/96
Pro return (insinuated):	10/96
Against return (total):	30/377
Against return (openly stated):	23/30
Against return (insinuated):	7/30
Number of deleted comments:	14
Number of comments missing:	1

Table 1. Basic descriptive data

DISCOURSES OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN TIMES OF CRISIS – THE CASE OF PARTHENON MARBLES

Figures

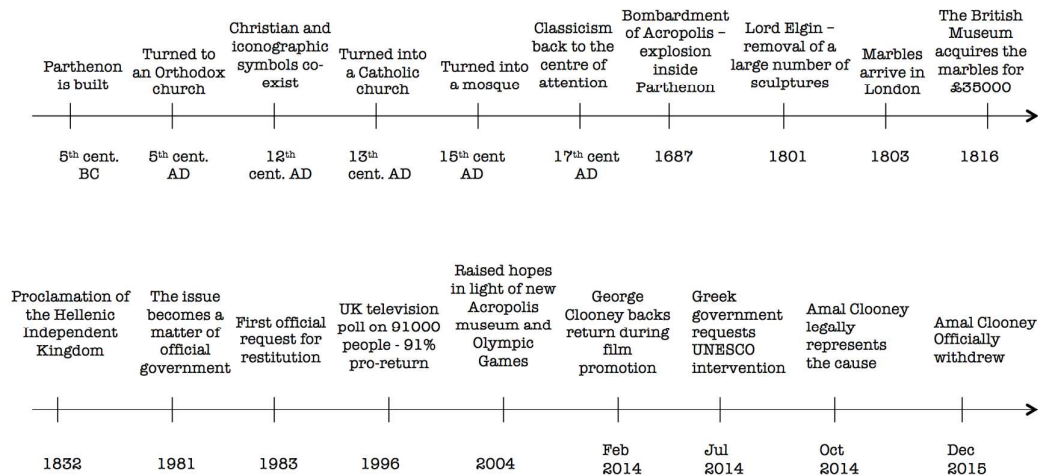


Figure 1. The Parthenon Marbles: A brief overview.

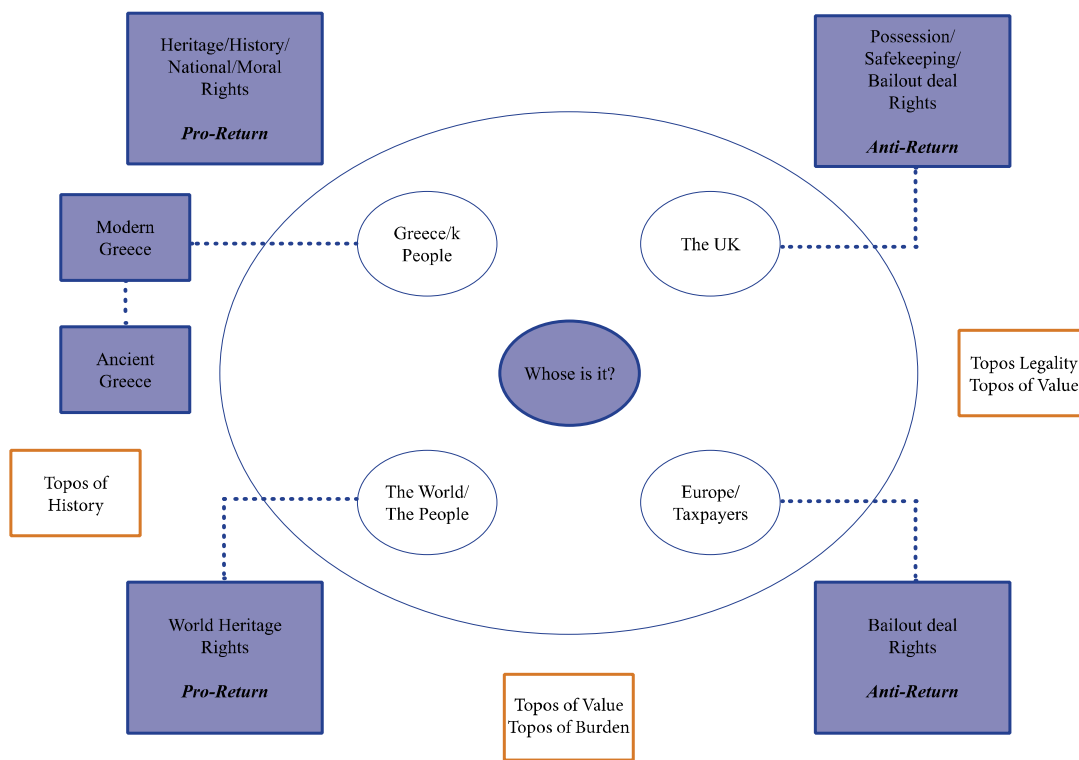


Figure 2. Negotiation of ownership

DISCOURSES OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN TIMES OF CRISIS – THE CASE OF PARTHENON MARBLES

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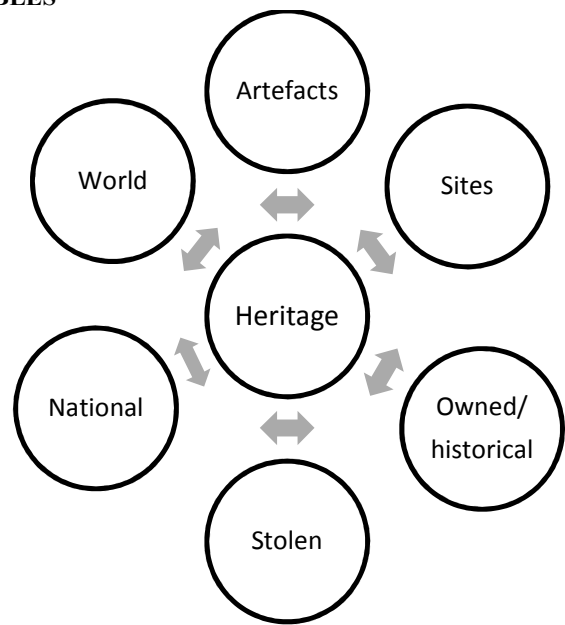


Figure 3. The co-construction of heritage in the data

DISCOURSES OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN TIMES OF CRISIS – THE CASE OF
PARTHENON MARBLES

44

Excerpts

1	Wiseftertheevent - 11 February 2014 11:37pm
2	No. They were acquired legally and for a fair price at the time, and had
3	they not been, the chances are they would have been irreparably damaged
4	or destroyed.
5	If we are to start on that track let's ask the Americans to give back every
6	historic artefact they have bought from Britain and other countries
7	throughout the world.
8	Theo Jan > Wiseftertheevent- 12 February 2014 1:07am
9	Did you say bought from Britain, in that case they are the rightful owners.
10	Elgin bought a piece of a Greek monument sacred to Greeks from Turkish
11	Thieves, a completely different story!

Excerpt 1.

1	On this point, I do concur with the principle that these marbles should be
2	returned as they are the essence of greek culture and civilisation.
1	and return the originals to their proper owner, which have immense
2	EMOTIONAL VALUE to the PEOPLE OF GREECE.

Excerpt 2.

1	Theo Jan – 12 February 2014 1:13am
2	
3	Greeks were the rightful owners of their own culture and not Turks. So Elgin
4	paid the thief, (that makes him a thief himself) and then the British state paid
5	the thief who paid the thief to take the loot! In this case I am afraid Britain is
6	also a thief in a line of pillagers. The worst thing is after so many years
7	Britain displays it proudly around the world. Here look at the stuff I have
8	been stealing around the world when I was having the power to do so!!! 4
9	SumerianThunderbox > Theo Jan - 12 February 2014 1:25am
10	
11	Greeks? How do you mean Greeks? What Greek national state was there in
12	450BC? What Greek identity existed at the time? Do you know how Athens
13	funded the creation of the Parthenon and its friezes? Do you have the first
14	clue about which you speak? 4
15	Theo Jan > SumerianThunderbox - 12 February 2014 1:49am
16	
17	And to answer your questions Greece (or Hellas), was a composition of
18	cities that were speaking the same language, had the same customs and
19	culture, believed in the same religion, and resided in the same are known
20	today as Greece (and the West side of Turkey-Still in this areas you can
21	listen to Greek being spoken). They were known to unite and set aside their
22	differences against enemies from the East (United like UK). Romans
23	invaded Greek impressed by their culture they adopted their religion,
24	building styles and blah blah blah.....(I guess you know it all) cause British
25	are taught ancient Greek and Roman history intensively at school.

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26	Greek of that time resembles the notion of United Kingdom. You all speak
27	English but you are different cities/states and when attacked by Nazis you
28	behave like one country 80 years later Scotland wants to set free! 2

Excerpt 3.

1	Richard Dean > Stelathens - 11 February 2014 11:55pm
2	
3	Oh I think enough young Brits know what Greece means, corrupt politicians, an
4	island full of blind people who drive cars, pensioners who haave been dead for
5	30 years but are still paid a pension, doctors who only treat if you are connected
6	or have hard cash..... do I need to carry on?

Excerpt 4.

1	vkhosla - 12 February 2014 3:00am
2	
3	I see that even "progressive" Brits support keeping what they looted from the
4	days of Empire. The colonial impulse dies hard.

Excerpt 5.

1	steveips - 12 February 2014 10:40am
2	
3	Would Greece like to pay Britain for all of those years of safe stewardship while
4	it was given by the Ottoman Empire? Would the Greeks like to demand
5	compensation from Turkey for giving Britain the marbles?
6	I imagine not as the answer would be that the Ottoman Empire no longer exists.
7	And neither did the Greek state.

Excerpt 6.

1	McStep - 11 February 2014 10:35pm
2	
3	we probably should give them back.
4	would also not mind if Greece backpayed the UK for decades of excruciating
5	maintenance and care (that one time that one prat decided to ""clean"" them
6	aside) and thanked us for saving them from the neglect and rot that much of the
7	Parthenon and broader classical antiquity in Greece was left to. quits if they take
8	Prince Philip back as well though.[...]

Excerpt 6.1.

1	Μαρία Καμαράτου - 14 February 2014 12:03am
2	

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3	[...] But deep down we all know that museums like the British, the German,
4	the Canadian & others throughout the world, would be shut down if they had to
5	return all the stolen art from other countries that they exhibit. I don't recall
6	seeing anything but Greek items in all the museums throughout Greece. [...]

Excerpt 7.

1	EcclesCake - 12 February 2014 7:28am
2	
3	[...]We all acknowledge the role of Greece in the development of our
4	civilisation and this is an important component in that heritage. It is neither
5	Britain's nor Greece's, it belongs to us; [...]

Excerpt 7.1.

1	loutraki > lichkingsmum - 12 February 2014 10:32am
2	
3	An honest argument. And given that Greeks invented rhetoric, an effective oral
4	case.

Excerpt 7.2.

1	Frites - 11 February 2014 11:58pm
2	
3	[...] PS Given all of the money that the German taxpayers have had to fork
4	over to Greece, perhaps an argument could be made for the marbles to be
5	housed in Berlin?

Excerpt 8.

1	loutraki > Luckyspin - 12 February 2014 10:26am
2	
3	Interestingly, half the money for the new Acropolis Museum came from mostly
4	British tax-payers via EU funding. The other half came from Greek banks
5	which have not been able to pay the cash back to UK tax-funded institutions
6	such as the Royal Bank of Scotland.
7	The new Acropolis Museum is beautiful -- but it was the British tax-payer who
8	funded it, so Clooney should at least give the British working people some
9	credit and brownie points. 3

Excerpt 8.1.

1	chrysts - 13 February 2014 7:37am
2	
3	It is really funny how most comments in favour of the British attempt to draw

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4	attention to the economic crisis Greece is tormented by the last few years. As if
5	Great Britain's economy is thriving at the moment. In any case, the issue is
6	neither a political one nor an economic one. It is a pity that the British attempt
7	to appear superior to other nations by insinuating that the Greeks would not
8	know how to protect and preserve the Parthenon marbles, when it is widely
9	known that the British caused great damage to the marbles when they first
10	placed them to their museum.
11	And finally let's be honest: The marbles are the main attraction of the British
12	museum. The British museum has little to show bar the Greek marbles and the
13	exhibits of other civilizations, like the Egyptian. The British wants the marbles
14	simply because they gain profit from them. It's all about money for them.

Excerpt 8.2.