

Jacek Kowalski

The Romance of Ruins



The
ROMANCE OF RUINS

Jacek Kowalski
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Photography



"Romantic apparition rooted in my mind, only a grey jagged shell remains of the color and joy of your youth. Youth is not a time, youth is an idea. The idea within these walls is not dead. Even as the insanity of the modern age betrays you as it festers and rots in nearby places, I stop here to touch the bones of the past, and to hammer out my soul on the unyielding strength of your stone."

Ruins have been a strong source of fascination for thoughtful travelers for centuries. Order and disorder, artistry and chaos. On the one hand they are symbols of human aesthetic achievement, technological skill, and as places of worship they remind us of the ideas that underpinned life in the past. On the other hand, they remind us of the inevitable triumph of time over strength, stark reminders of the decay and impermanence of all things. They are manifestations of the tension between transience and persistence that is a perennial source of fascination. The ruin contains within itself a ghost of former self. In this way, ruins have a certain kind of expressiveness such that their contemplation becomes a type of aesthetic experience.

As remnants of the past, ruins evoke nostalgia in a uniquely powerful way. Nostalgia. The word has its origins in the Greek words for homecoming (*nostos*) and for pain (*algos*). On the one hand there is a desire for return to a simpler time and even a return to the ideological roots of our civilization and culture. At the same time there is a pain in the realization that everything must eventually pass away into decay and ruin, never to be recovered intact. Everything comes to nothing. These cold grey stones are all that remains, and even they are endangered by decay and our forgetfulness. The emergent truth is that, no matter how much we may ache for it, we can never really go home.







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^ Valley of Temples, Agrigento , Sicily
> Temple E, Selinunte, Sicily



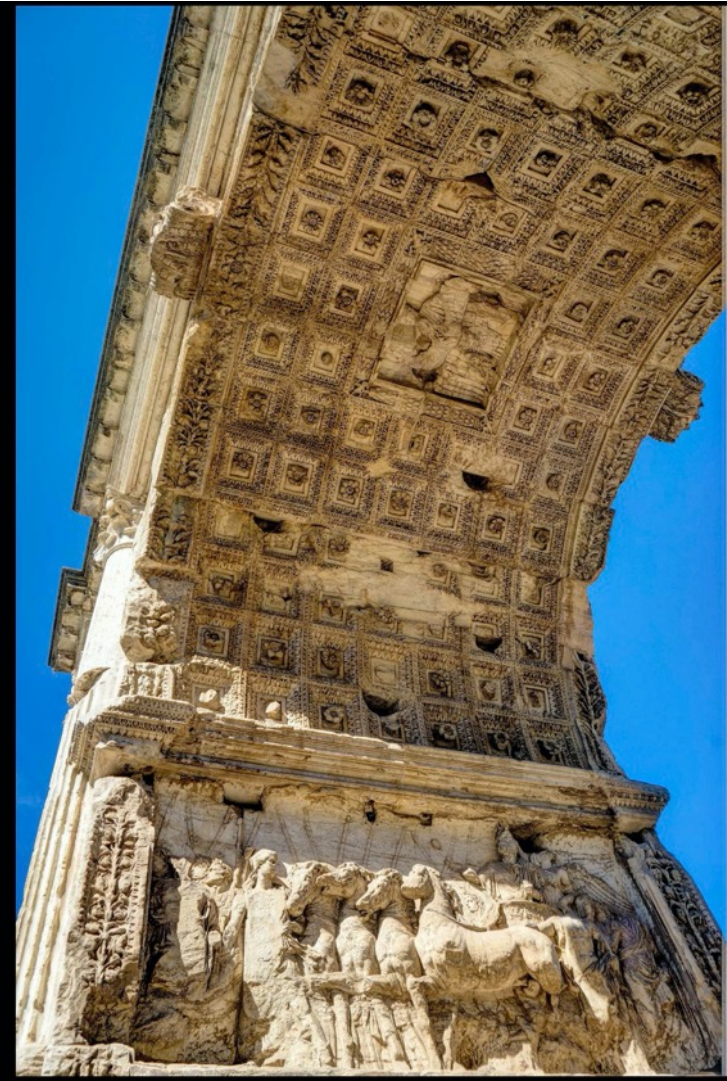


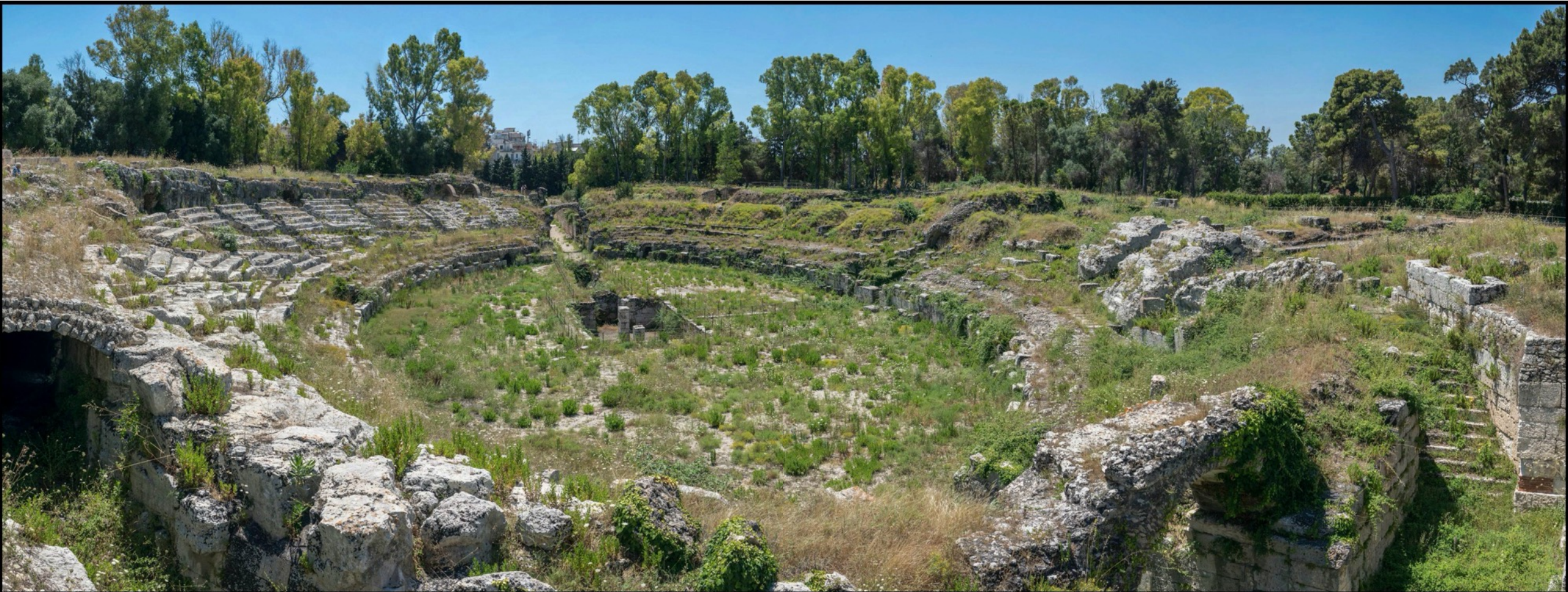


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^ Temple E, Selinunte, Sicily



< Temple of Juno, Agrigento, Sicily
^ Steps, Valley of the Temples, Agrigento, Sicily
Next Page: Colosseum, Rome, and Arch of Titus, Rome





^ Roman Amphitheater, Syracuse



< 3rd century Roman
mosaics, Piazza
Armerina, Sicily

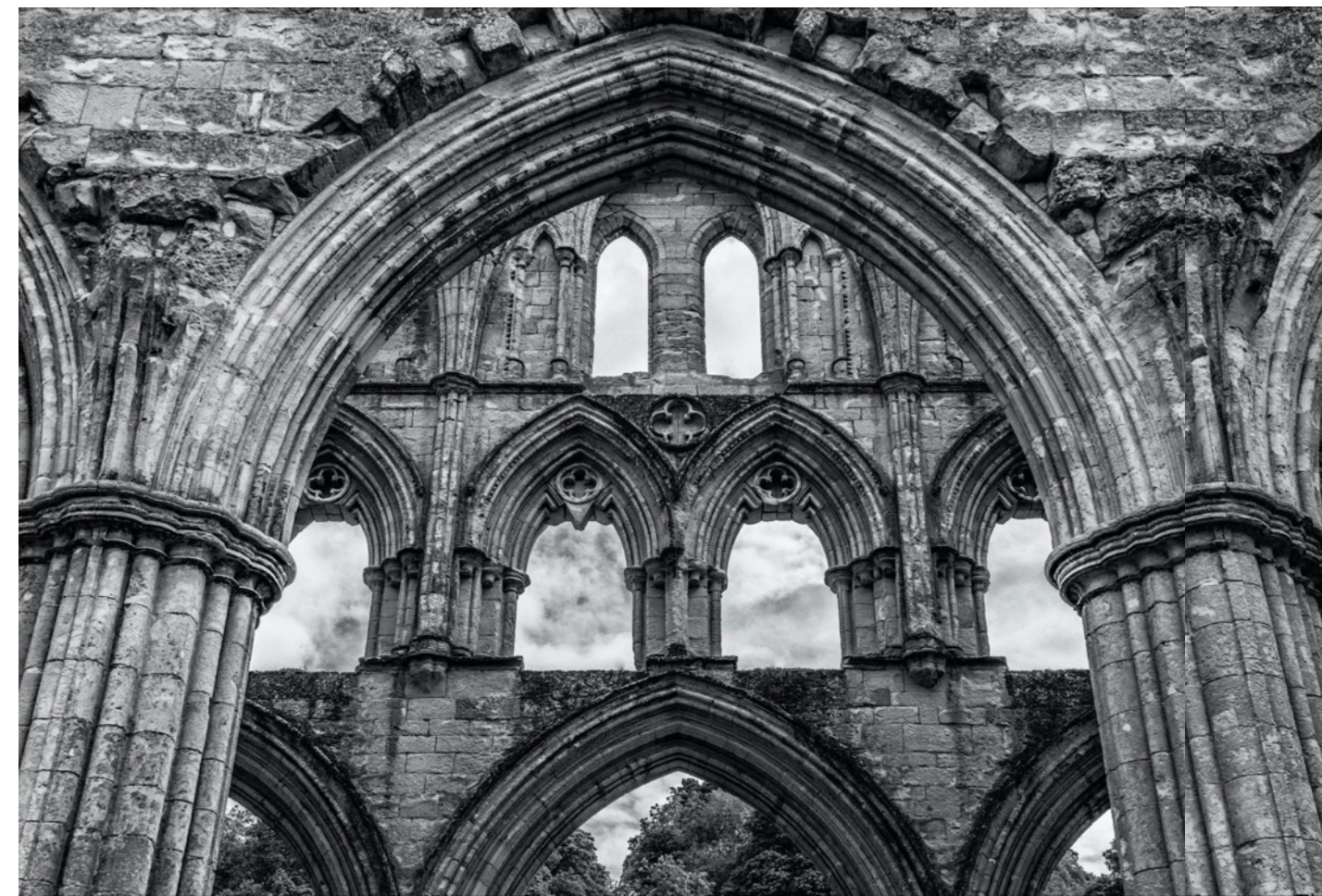
> Via Sacra and Arch
of Titus, Rome





**THE RUINED ABBEYS
of
YORKSHIRE
and
WALES**

< Whitby Abbey, Yorkshire



^ Rievaulx Abbey, Yorkshire
> Fountains Abbey, Yorkshire





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< Fountains Abbey, Yorkshire
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Abbey, Yorkshire

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Byland Abbey, Yorkshire

< Whitby Abbey, Yorkshire

