The Destiny of the Parthenon Marbles

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Proceedings from a Seminar sponsored by the Society for the Preservation of the Greek Heritage

and held at the
Corcoran Gallery of Art
Washington, D.C.
February 13, 1999

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Society for the Preservation of the Greek Heritage
5125 MacArthur Boulevard, NW
Washington, DC 20016

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Front Cover Photo
Slab II from the west frieze
photographed at the British Museum
Courtesy of
William St Clair

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The Contributors

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William St Clair was educated at St. John's College, Oxford, where he studied the classics, including Greek sculpture. During his career as an official in the British government service, he wrote a number of widely commended books, including *Lord Elgin and the Marbles* in 1967; the third edition, published in 1998, is completely revised and includes three new chapters. In 1998 St Clair was appointed Senior Research Fellow, Trinity College, Cambridge; he is a consultant to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and to the European Union.

David A. Walden has been Chairman of UNESCO's Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in Case of Illicit Appropriation since 1996, and has represented Canada on this 22-member Committee since 1985. He currently holds the position of Secretary-General to the Canadian Commission for UNESCO. From 1984 - 1999, he was Secretary to the Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board, and Director of Movable Cultural Property with the Department of Canadian Heritage.

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Statements

Read at the Outset of the Seminar

"Greece is the cradle of world culture. Everyone is born in Greece, even the Russians, even I, a Siberian.

"All of us have to be spiritual columns in the resurrected Parthenon. Each crumb of its ruins has to be given back to the land where it was created."

Yevgeny Yevtushenko
Poet, Letter sent to the British Committee for the Restitution of the Parthenon Marbles, February 1999.

"We of the Melina Mercouri Foundation warmly salute the Society for the Preservation of the Greek Heritage. What you do today is worthy of your name. Precious cores of the Greek heritage were the constant examination and pursuit of moral and just behavior. These principles are at the core of the appeal to the British government. It certainly behooves it to honor such principles. Aristotle addressed the theme of magnanimity. We recommend his conclusion to Prime Minister Blair and his government: 'Magnanimity is the estimation of one's own worth'."

Jules Dassin
President, Foundation Melina Mercouri
Message to the Seminar, February 1999.

Introduction

In June 1998, I heard William St Clair speak at the "Megaron" in Athens on newly documented evidence showing how certain of the Parthenon Marbles were damaged by unauthorized cleaning with metal tools and abrasives while at the British Museum. The revelations were contained in the third revised edition of his book, *Lord Elgin and the Marbles*, Oxford 1998. I approached St Clair about presenting these, and other facts, at a seminar in Washington that would examine different aspects of the history and destiny of the Marbles, to which he agreed. This is how the Society for the Preservation of the Greek Heritage conceived the idea of organizing one of its series of Seminars, often on controversial topics where different perspectives are represented. This was co-sponsored by the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, where it was held in February, 1999. UNESCO, which meanwhile had begun to show serious interest in this major issue of national patrimony, recognized the event in Washington as "the first international conference" on the Parthenon Marbles.

Subsequently, as part of the response to St Clair's book, the British Museum held in November/December 1999, a two-day Conference devoted to discussing the present surfaces of all the Parthenon sculptures, and especially the "Cleaning" in 1937=38 of some of the Marbles now in London. Before the Conference, further historical documents relating to the episode were made available by St Clair in his article in the *International Journal of Cultural Property*, as well as a number of photographs which appeared to show the actual scraping. The British Museum also released a selection of primary documents which had hitherto been illegally withheld from researchers.

In preparation for the Conference, a team of scientific experts from Greece were enabled, in October 1999, to carry out a preliminary inspection of the Marbles using modern instruments. They were able to confirm that in the case of many of the sculptures the previously surviving brown patina, that is the original surface, had been removed in 1937-38. In the case of some other pieces, the surfaces had been smoothed. Although a number of speakers at the Conference attempted to discount the importance of this damage, officials of the British Museum admitted that widespread scraping had occurred and that Museum authorities had, for sixty years, tried to prevent the main facts from becoming known. To replace what they called these "scandals" they promised a new policy of "openness" and further international work on the surfaces. But they offered no acknowledgement or apology for the institutionalized cover-up that had misled governments, parliaments and the public, and that had marred the research work of scholars.

After the Conference, Mr. Constantine Bitsios, the Greek Chargé d'Affaires in London, made a formal complaint to the British Museum and to the British Government about some aspects of the design and operation of the Conference. Other participants also protested.

The main point to emerge is that the claim that the "Elgin Marbles" have been well looked after while in the care of the British Museum (the "stewardship argument") can no longer be made. Although questions relating to the future of the Marbles were not on the agenda for the London Conference, they are to be investigated by a Select Committee of the British House of Commons when it considers, in 2000, "The Return of Cultural Property."■

Anna L. Lea
President
Society for the Preservation of the Greek Heritage

Preface to the Seminar on the Parthenon Marbles

Karl E. Meyer

Our subject is the oldest, most celebrated, fiercely contested argument over art restitution known to history. It is now almost two centuries since Lord Elgin, the British Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, obtained the permits that enabled him to remove and carry home the Parthenon sculptures that were purchased in 1815 by the British Government. The controversy provoked by his deed began almost immediately, with Byron leading the way. Was the seventh Earl of Elgin a despoiler or preserver? By what right did a British diplomat employing a Turkish permit acquire as his personal property these Greek cultural treasures? In any case, whatever the original rights or wrongs, should the British Museum, their present keeper, at long last return these splendid carvings – fifty-six pieces of the friezes, fifteen metopes and seventeen pediment sculptures, plus a caryatid and a column from the Erectheion – to their ancient home in Athens?

As the archaeologist Ellen Herscher has aptly written, this controversy is the ur-text of restitution disputes, the case against which all others are measured. The issues it poses fall squarely in the bloody crossroads where art, commerce, ethics and politics collide. Its protagonists – Lords Elgin and Byron, the Greek Government and the British Museum – have acquired a global symbolism. It is thus fitting that the Society for the Preservation of the Greek Heritage sponsored a seminar on "The Parthenon Sculptures: Their History and Destiny" at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Not just fitting but

timely, since there are fresh developments in this oldest such controversy, notably new evidence found by the British scholar **William St Clair** that the sculptures were damaged at the British Museum in a misguided effort to make them look more "authentic." Mr. St Clair, author of the definitive *Lord Elgin and the Marbles*, recently reissued in a third edition, was the seminar's keynote speaker. Why, how and when the Parthenon was built is set forth by an outstanding field archaeologist, Prof. **Stephen G. Miller** of the University of California at Berkeley, director of excavations at Nemea (whose ancient Games he helped revive in 1996 in the stadium last used 2,000 years ago). **Dr. Alexandros Mantis**, the Greek Ministry of Culture's Senior Archaeologist at the Acropolis, describes current efforts to preserve and restore the ancient temple. Schooled at Athens, Bonn and London, Dr. Mantis is renowned for his knowledge of classical sculpture and his outstanding visual memory. Speaking for UNESCO, whose symbol happens to be the Parthenon, is **David A. Walden**, chairman of the organization's committee on restitution, on which he has been Canada's representative since 1985. For myself, I have been involved in restitution issues as author of *The Plundered Past* (1974) and as a member of The New York Times Editorial Board from 1979 to 1997. As moderator, it was my hope that those taking part in the seminar would search for agreement on facts and discuss dispassionately the important principles at issue. I am pleased that this permanent record is now available. ■

The Parthenon Marbles: *Questions of Authenticity*

William St Clair

In this article I discuss the recent history of those parts of the sculptures of the Parthenon which were taken from Athens and brought to England by agents of Lord Elgin. Since my book, *Lord Elgin and the Marbles*, third revised edition, Oxford University Press, 1998, came out, more documentary material has come to light, and some of what I say is not in the book.[1] To avoid any misunderstandings, can I say straightaway that if I use the phrase 'Elgin Marbles,' it is not because I am unaware of the westernizing, appropriating, connotations of these words. I use the traditional phrase for convenience, to avoid having to repeat the mouthful, 'those parts of the Parthenon sculptures and architecture taken from the building or excavated from the Acropolis of Athens by agents of Lord Elgin at the beginning of the nineteenth century, with a few pieces donated or purchased later, which are presently held in the British Museum in a legal trusteeship on behalf of the British nation and of the wider world.'[2] The broad history of how many of the Parthenon sculptures came to be in London is well established.[3] In 1799 Lord Elgin was appointed British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire in Constantinople. His embassy, he realized, presented a rare opportunity to improve Western Europe's knowledge of the monuments of Athens. Although they were already well known through engravings, he wanted more detailed drawings, and plaster casts of the actual surviving antiquities. His aim was to use this information to improve modern art and design. In accordance with the aesthetics of his day, he wished the artists of his day to benefit from the achieve-

ments of what he saw as the best period of classical art, that is of the fifth century BC. It was, we might say, a top down, aristocratic, approach. The leaders of society had recognized the best in taste and they wished to diffuse it more widely and more deeply within the nation. There was no suggestion at this time, it is worth emphasizing, that any original pieces should be removed.

The British Government refused to help, but Elgin went ahead at his own expense, recruiting a party of artists and moulders in Italy. Athens was then a small town, scarcely changed since it was captured by the Ottoman invaders in 1456. By the end of the eighteenth century, travellers from Western Europe were visiting Athens in greater numbers than ever before. Naval ships of many countries anchored at Piraeus, sending their crews on trips to Athens. Many of these visitors wanted to buy original antiquities. They had money in their pockets and hammers in their knapsacks. The Ottoman soldiers were happy to sell, and pieces of the sculptures were soon being broken off at an alarming rate.

In the long history of the Parthenon this form of destruction was quite recent. The Parthenon had stood largely intact, with only minor structural damage until the gunpowder explosion of 1687 rendered it a ruin. From then on until the latter part of the eighteenth century it survived without much further active damage. But with the opening up of Greece to the West, the rate of destruction accelerated sharply. In 1749, for example, the traveller Dalton drew twelve figures in the west pediment of the Parthenon. By the time Elgin's agents arrived in 1800 there were only four. By 1800, five slabs of the frieze drawn by Stuart in the 1750s had completely disappeared. The two figures in the left corner of the west pediment still had their heads in place when they were drawn by William Pars in 1765. By the time Elgin's agents arrived both heads had gone. This rapid erosion of the monuments was largely

uncontrolled, the market in classical antiquities was a lively one, and there was no reason at the time to believe that it could soon be halted.

In 1801, Elgin obtained a Firman, that is a letter from the central government in Constantinople addressed to the Governor of Athens, asking him to grant certain requests. British forces had just expelled the French from Egypt, the British Ambassador had great influence at the court, and the granting of the Firman was just one of many favours which Elgin enjoyed. The only text known to survive is an official Italian translation of the original Turkish. By a historical accident it is now in my possession, and I published the Italian text for the first time in my book. The Firman requests that Elgin's artists should be allowed to enter the Acropolis, to draw, and to make moulds for casts. It also asks the Governor to give them permission to dig, 'and to take away any pieces of stone with inscriptions or figures.'

The obvious meaning of the words is that Elgin's agents should be allowed to take away any stones with inscriptions or figures which they found by digging. But by a mixture of threats and bribes, Elgin's secretary persuaded the Ottoman authorities in Athens to stretch the terms to cover the taking away of sculptures from the buildings. Most people at the time understood that the Firman did not give permission to take from the buildings.

In subsequent years, Elgin and later British ambassadors obtained a number of other Firmans from the Ottoman Government. The effect of these later Firmans was to give an amnesty to the Ottoman officials who had connived at the removals, and to permit the export of Elgin's collection of antiquities from Ottoman jurisdiction. The texts of these later legitimating Firmans have not survived. From the time the Marbles were first removed, it has been customary for British ministers and others to say that they were legally acquired, and it has been the opinion of most legal experts that no claim for them to be returned to

Greece based on purely legal considerations would be likely to succeed.[4] As far as Elgin and his agents were concerned questions of legality scarcely arose. In Elgin's mind he was taking advantage of a unique moment of good fortune to perform an act of rescue, and historically in the circumstances of Ottoman Athens he was probably right. The casual piecemeal destruction of the Parthenon continued for another generation after Elgin's time, until it was brought to an end by the independent Greek state.

I have recently seen some financial accounts of Elgin's operations in Athens which were not previously known. They show that about a quarter of all the expenses at Athens were for 'presents.' During the first year and a half alone, the Military Governor of the Acropolis received bribes equivalent to thirty five times his annual salary in return for turning his eyes away and allowing the terms of the Firman to be stretched. The scale of these payments went beyond any ritual exchange of gifts and courtesies, normal and lavish though these were in the Ottoman empire. Nor was there much attempt to conceal what was really happening. The Voivode received his payment in the form of a promissory note which he could lodge with a foreign banker (of whom there were several resident in Athens), in explicit recognition of his cooperative attitude towards the removals which had already taken place. The Disdar was paid in cash, piece by piece, at rising prices, for each of the sculptures and architectural pieces which he permitted Elgin's agents to take. The Firman, a document which was in form a favour given by the Sultan to a political ally interested in the arts, was in practice an official concession to mine for antiquities on the Acropolis of Athens.

Elgin's removals from Athens went on for several years with hundreds of men employed at heavy cost, and enormous sums paid in further bribes. They had a significant effect on the whole local economy of Athens and the sur-

rounding area. It was all done as a private enterprise, with Elgin claiming personal ownership of everything taken, although of course he would never have been given the Firman if he had not been the British ambassador.

The claim that the Marbles were legally acquired, which depends heavily on the legitimating Firmans, may not be much affected by the new information about the bribery. However, it is worth noting that the same issues involving political influence and bribery, at the centre and locally, still arise today when new international efforts are being made to discourage the casual and illegal digging up of archaeological sites, with resulting damage to artifacts, loss of provenance, and irreplaceable destruction of potential knowledge about the past.[5] According to Lord Renfrew, distinguished archaeologist, campaigner for controls on the illicit trade in antiquities, and a Trustee of the British Museum, 'It is our duty to show such people [buyers of looted artifacts] the monstrosity of what they are doing without making it a cause for censoriousness. Moralities are changing, times are changing. The British Museum would not today acquire the Elgin Marbles.'[6]

Let me now turn to the Parthenon sculptures as they existed when they were taken by Lord Elgin. They were, of course, fragmentary, having been smashed and scattered by war, religion, fire, earthquake, explosion, looting, vandalism, and souvenir hunting. Some suffered further in the course of Elgin's removals. In one respect only were they intact. For many hundreds of years, perhaps fifteen hundred or more, their surfaces had remained unaltered by the hand of man. Most had probably not received any maintenance or repair since the building ceased to be used as a temple some time in late antiquity. Considering how old they were, some of the sculptures were in amazingly good condition.[7] Traveller after traveller was amazed at how, despite the disasters of two thousand years, many of the sculptures and architectural features were still in excellent

condition, the surfaces smooth and polished, the carving sharp and crisp. As one architectural student who saw them close up in 1803 remarked, 'in many places the edges of the marble are as perfect as if executed yesterday.'[8] The importance of the historic surfaces to an appreciation of Greek art was already fully understood long before the Marbles reached the British Museum. Unlike the many classical statues found in Italy, which were mostly copies of lost originals and had been restored and polished, the Parthenon Marbles were undoubtedly original, authentic, and untouched. They had come, as it were, straight from Phidias. And they showed features which upset commonly-held beliefs about the nature of Greek art. Colour was also to be seen, particularly on some of the architectural pieces, although others disputed whether it was colour surviving from ancient times.[9] But if most scholars knew that ancient sculptures had been painted, there were others who believed that they had originally been white. This was not only an archaeological error, an example of a delay in the diffusion of knowledge gained from research, but it was part of an aesthetic which had dominated Western attitudes to classical sculpture since the first ancient statues were rediscovered at the time of the Italian Renaissance. Winckelmann, for example, whose writings on the history of ancient art were particularly influential, believed that the essence of sculpture is form, in contrast to painting which used colour. Basing his observations on the ancient statues found in Italy, he believed that ancient marble statues were normally white, the colour of purity, the essence of beauty.

The early archaeologists also noted that remains of the metal attachments were still to be found in the many holes in the sculptures, indications of what had once been wreaths, weapons, and bridles. This discovery also upset the received wisdom that the essence of sculpture is pure form. All the hanging attachments are now lost, but

nobody then seems to have much minded. Indeed, as unwitting victims of the Winckelmann theory, they even welcomed the loss. As the author of the first British Museum catalogue wrote, drawing a sharp distinction between the archaeological and the aesthetic and putting his own time's aesthetic preferences first : "Though the archaeologist may regret the absence of those parts which would have shown the full details of the manner in which the horses were attached to the chariot, . . . the artist cannot but rejoice that the fine forms of the animals are submitted to his view in all their breadth and beauty, and that the parts are not intersected with lines, and frittered into pieces, which would scarcely have failed to interfere with the beauty and grandeur of the composition."[10] Even today the weight of this Winckelmann legacy, that sculpture is essentially form, can still be felt. Last summer, for example, the British Museum opened a new gallery which includes some reconstructions of how the Parthenon sculptures may have looked in ancient times. The pictures rightly show the bright painted colours, but for some reason not given, there are no bridles or metal attachments.

There are many nineteenth and twentieth century pictures which offer contrasting visions of how the buildings of ancient Athens may have looked at the time they were first erected.[11] Some show the building and sculptures white, others imagine them in painted colours with the metal attachments. By contrast, the many pictures made in Elgin's time, and for long before and after, show the whole building as mainly brown. Those who saw the Parthenon and its sculptures in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries struggled to find words to describe the mellow tints which blended imperceptibly from one to another. White, yellow, ivory, but also black, brown, tawny, honey-coloured, amber-hued, russet, ochreous, and red. To western eyes this rich mixture of browns and whites was often abbreviated to 'golden.' At the time of the removals, the

parts of the Parthenon brought to London were, it is hardly necessary to say, the same mixture of colours as those which were left behind in Athens.

Colour is, to an extent, the result of natural and reflected light, and it makes a difference whether the light is bright or dull. If the sunset is red, the marble looks red. If the walls of a gallery are brown, it will look brownish, and these effects can be heightened by electric spotlights, clear or coloured, such as are presently installed in the British Museum. Until recently, and sometimes even today, the air of Athens was unusually clear and free from pollution, and to visitors from more northern countries, the marble had (and has) a magical quality which changes constantly with the changing light.[12] Perception of colour is also culturally conditioned by the preconceptions of the observer. The early observers who mistakenly believed that the Parthenon and its sculptures had originally been white tended to describe the building they saw in terms of its former whiteness. Others, including many in the romantic and the Victorian periods, actively preferred the romantic associations of brown, the once bright white and pure Athens in the mellow golden autumn of her glory.

The main cause of the brown colour was, they believed, fully understood by most of the travellers, by the early archaeologists, and by the early Keepers in the British Museum. With Pentelic marble, the local material from Mount Pentelikon with which the Parthenon and its sculptures were constructed, the high concentration of iron seeps through to the surface at varying speeds as it reacts with moisture in the air, changing the colour over time from white to varying shades of brown. The early archaeologists saw that the brown was the marble surface, not something added to the surface, and in some cases revealed and preserved the tool marks of the original artists. They knew, too, that this change in the colour of the surface was not to

be confused with ancient painted polychromy, although traces of polychromy might also be present.

Others have suggested that the brown is the result of the interaction of micro-organisms with the surface, and the scientific explanation is not yet finally settled. However, whatever the explanation, the browning is one of the key aesthetic characteristics of Pentelic marble, often described in the handbooks for modern artists and marble workers in the nineteenth century and later.

While the air of Greece was mostly pure and dry (that is until 1955-65, after which pollution accelerated), the rate at which the surface of the marble changed colour was very slow, to be measured over decades and centuries rather than years, and the surface change could be less than a millimetre deep.[13] At the same time, the marble was liable to continuing erosion. By Elgin's time, for example, the parts of the building exposed to the south wind from the sea were more corroded than the rest and therefore more white, but the more sheltered parts were more brown.

Over much of the building, and to a much lesser extent on the sculptures, patches of a particularly dark or orange brown shade were, and are, also to be seen, often raised a little above the rest of the surfaces. Some of the early travellers and archaeologists speculated that these might be more than the results of iron leaching through to the surface, but might, instead or in addition, be traces of ancient artificial coatings, perhaps tinted, which are known to have been applied to other buildings, and to marble statues, in ancient times. This process, known to the ancient Greeks as 'ganosis,' was intended to reduce the glare of the Mediterranean sun.[14] Modern studies of the surfaces of the building in Athens and of the sculptures in London have tended to confirm this explanation.

In addition, over the long history of the Parthenon, besides any coatings which may have been applied during the Byzantine, Frankish, and Ottoman periods, the surface

had been affected by the effects of fire, moisture, dirt, and by other inorganic or organic agents which might have interacted with the marble. Since marble is highly porous, it is easily discoloured in ways which cannot be offset by washing the surface, for example, if it comes into contact with wet iron (some of the Elgin Marbles showed, and still show, patches of the kind that we would expect from the use of naval hooks or iron lifting gear used during their tortuous journey from the Acropolis of Athens to the museum in London). And once in a museum, the surface of Pentelic marble may change colour further as a result of interaction with later dirt, with substances put on later for cosmetic or preservative purposes, or from the effects of materials used in cleaning and moulding.[15] The common use of the word 'patina' to include all the effects which contributed to the variegated golden colour, or alternatively to confine its use to the possible remains of artificial coatings, can be confusing.[16] The love of the brown golden colours of the Parthenon is a phenomenon of Western aesthetics connected with nineteenth century European romanticism, a contrast with the Winckelmann classicism which went before. But, we may ask at this point, can we say anything about how the ancient world may have regarded the slow change in the appearance? Although there is much modern scholarly writing about polychromy and some about patina on bronze, I am not aware of any discussion of the ancient aesthetics of the changing colour of Pentelic marble–what one early archaeologist called Nature's polychromy.[17] Since the question affects our understanding of the possible appearance, and therefore the perception, of the temple in ancient times, I therefore offer some preliminary suggestions.

There does not seem to be much evidence that the ancients gave the particular value to white, as the colour of purity, which it occupies in the modern western tradition. In the *Odyssey* Penelope's skin is described as being whiter

than ivory, and in ancient literature buildings are praised for being marmoreal, but most of the examples that have been found can be read literally. Secondly, the emerging brown surface is special to the Pentelic marble of Athens. Island marble from Naxos and Paros contains less iron, and the change in colour from white to brown is less marked. Italian marble changes even less. The artists of the Hephaisteion, a temple in Athens almost contemporary with the Parthenon, used whiter marble from Paros for the sculptures while using Pentelic marble for the architecture.[18] In the Erechtheion, another temple built with Pentelic marble, black limestone from Eleusis was used for the frieze to which the figures in marble were attached by clamps.[19] Elsewhere in the Hellenic world limestone temples were coated with a white chalky stucco. These varying decisions are likely to have been influenced by a perception of the different aesthetic qualities of the materials to which the Hellenic cities had access, as well as by other considerations such as availability, suitability for working, durability, and cost.

In describing the changing qualities of the surface of bronze statues, Plutarch uses the term "to antheron," the flowering, apparently in contrast to unpleasant rust.[20] The bronze, he says, achieves some of its beauty when it flowers out [exanthei]. This metaphor of flowering surface is the same that he uses in describing the marble buildings of Periclean Athens, which, he says, seeing them five hundred years after they were built, still looked as if they had just been made. "Every work of the time of Pericles had from the moment of its creation the beauty of an ancient masterpiece, but yet it retains its freshness and newness to this day. There is a certain newness that seems to flower upon them [epanthei] which keeps their beauty untouched by time, as if they had perpetual breath of life, and an unageing soul mingled in their composition."[21] The phrase about "flowering upon" in this passage has usually been

read and translated simply as a conventional lifeless metaphor, but I wonder if it may not be preferable to read it more literally, with its Greek cognates, as a reference to the changing colour of the Pentelic marble? The Parthenon, in any parts where the Pentelic marble was not painted in colour or otherwise artificially coated, and in those parts too if the polychromy or coating was not renewed, may have been quite brown by Plutarch's time. Over the many centuries of antiquity during which the Periclean Parthenon was in active use for its original religious and civic purposes, it may have become an ever more conspicuously local Athenian monument in the colour of its prime building material.[22] That is not to say that those who rebuilt the temples of Athens after the Persian wars necessarily intended, or foresaw, that such aesthetic and political effects would result, although it is possible that they did.

Let me now return to what happened to the sculptures taken by Lord Elgin's agents. They were shipped from Athens in a variety of ships. All of them spent years in store in various seaports, and some of the most important pieces lay at the bottom of the sea or on the beach for eighteen months at Cythera when one of the transport ships sank. All eventually reached London. Elgin, who spent some years as a prisoner of Napoleon, was broken in health and financially ruined. The object of many attacks by Lord Byron and others, he was deeply in debt. The Elgin Marbles, as they were now called, were bought by the British Government, after an inquiry, in 1816 and entrusted to the Trustees of the British Museum to be preserved on behalf of the nation.

Put into a museum, the Parthenon sculptures lost their context. They ceased to be incidental decorations to a sacred building and to a sacred site, but were placed in a secular gallery, specially set apart from the harsh real world outside. They immediately began to be culturally con-

structed in the western sense as works of art. As such they were also invested with the western dreams of the western viewers. To many critics of the nineteenth century, for example, Haydon and Hazlitt, Goethe and Hegel, and later Ruskin and Pater, the Elgin Marbles were, quite simply, the finest works of art ever achieved by human genius, unsurpassed and unsurpassable. They were the artistic representations of the age of Periclean Athens, the moment when, they believed, civilization reached its highest pinnacle — until, that is, the emergence of modern Europe.

Again and again from the time the Marbles arrived in London, right through until well into the present century, we hear the same words, perfect, natural ideal, pure. The fact that they were fragmentary heightened their authenticity under the aesthetics of romanticism. The neo-classical sculptor Canova, when invited to restore the lost parts of the Elgin Marbles, is reported to have declared that "however greatly it was to be lamented that these statues should have suffered from time and barbarism, yet it is undeniable that they had never been retouched, and that they were the work of the ablest artists the world had ever seen. . . It would be sacrilege in him, or any man, to presume to touch them with a chisel."[23] Canova's statement has rightly been seen as capturing a key moment in the quest for authenticity associated with European romanticism, and with a modern respect for the past. As Hazlitt declared, "the Elgin Marbles are more impressive from their mouldering, imperfect, state."[24] Or, as Keats wrote, "they mingled Grecian grandeur with the rude /Wasting of old Time."[25] Another aspect of this authenticity was the fact that they carried their history visibly on their surface, the mixture of colours and the contrast between the ancient brown and the sparkle of recently chipped white proclaiming their extreme age in the act of seeing. As was remarked by Visconti, the director of the Vatican Museum, who prepared the first list of Elgin's collection, they bore "the mark of a crust which

time alone can give."[26] Already in a publication of 1816, the Elgin Marbles were advertised as "chaste and spirited."[27] The next generation found an added appeal in what they perceived as the celebration of motherhood. As the author of a popular handbook to the Museum pointed out, summarizing the views of Ruskin: "If you were for some prolonged period to study Greek sculpture exclusively in the Elgin Room of the British Museum. . . you would imagine the Greeks were the masters of all that was grand, simple, wise, and tenderly human, opposed to the pettiness of the toys of the rest of mankind. . .There is nothing of the grossness of the unclothed body which the photograph gives, or is so offensive in some modern sculptures. The women of Greece, however, were evidently always clad, because, as Ruskin has pointed out, the typical woman of the race, Venus, 'power only over lawful and domestic love'." The same observing critic has also noted that the Greek Venus is conspicuous for her broad and full breasts, the sign, with emblems usually associated with her, that "her essential function is child-bearing." This is fully illustrated by the female figures of the Elgin Marbles, and indeed, by most of the Greek sculptures in the British Museum, all of which are remarkable for their ample bosoms.[28] Let me offer a quotation from the Victorian art historian Walter Pater, one of many whose homo-erotically charged admiration for the Elgin Marbles knew few limits: "If a single product only of Hellenic art were to be saved from the wreck of all beside, one might choose perhaps from the 'beautiful multitude' of the Panathenaic frieze, that line of youths on horseback, with their level glances, their proud, patient lips, their chastened reins, their whole bodies in exquisite service. This colourless, unclassified parity of life, with its blending and interpenetration of intellectual, spiritual, and physical element, still folded together, pregnant with the possibilities of a whole world closed within it, is the highest

expression of the indifference which lies beyond all that is relative."[29] Note the word "colourless." The notion of absolute beauty required that the sculptures should be, if not white, at least colourless. For if the Parthenon sculptures had been painted in realistic colours was it not the duty of the modern artists also to use colour in contemporary sculptures? And if works of art had effects on the mental states, the morality, and the eventually the behaviour of viewers, what would the effects of realistic colour be? Part of the appeal of the Elgin Marbles to the Victorians, as Ruskin pointed out, was that only the male figures were naked, the female figures being well draped.

I quote the words of Richard Westmacott, son of the neo-classical whiter that white sculptor of the same name, for many years a dominant figure in the British Museum. Westmacott had no doubt that the Elgin Marbles were "unquestionably the finest that exist," the embodiment of Truth and Beauty. But: "Recognizing the moral influence art is capable of exercising, we cannot but feel that if so meretricious an accompaniment to sculpture as flesh tints ever became popular, it must inevitably lead to a preference of a class of subjects that would lower the character of this art; easily rendering it an instrument of corruption, rather than the means of refining and elevating the taste of a people."[30] To some Victorians, coloured statues would be almost pornographic.

Notions of whiteness were also linked with notions of race. Robert Knox, for example, the author of one of the earliest and most influential studies that offered a purportedly scientific account of the different inherent characteristics of different peoples, was a warm admirer of the Elgin Marbles. Knox helped to promote the notion that the ancient Greeks had been an ideal European blue-eyed white race, closely akin racially to the modern Northern European races who claimed to be the inheritors of their civilization.[31] To many of the Victorian age and later,

therefore, encumbered with the psycho-sexual and racial fears of their times, the presumed original whiteness of the Elgin Marbles was invested with high cultural and ideological significance. Some like Pater clung to their misconception long after it was known to be an archaeological error. Others were content to say that the Ancient Greeks had simply been wrong, and had shown bad taste in painting their statues, and that the Marbles were somehow more authentic in modern London with the colour gone.

Once in London the Elgin Marbles were not only perceived in different ways, they also changed physically. Transported from the bright south to the dull north, the Marbles offered a different experience to the viewer. In the clear air of Athens the mixture of whites and browns was pleasing and romantic. In cold, drab, foggy, and smoky London the Marbles looked dingy and dirty. Among first actions when the Marbles were transferred to the British Museum in 1816 was the recruiting of a labourer "for the purpose of lighting and attending the fires, cleaning the Marbles etc."[32] The fires, incidentally, were needed to keep the naked artists' models from freezing in the London cold.

We have seen how, in recent decades, with the arrival of air pollution in Athens, the marble surfaces of the Parthenon building have crumbled, destroying the sharpness of the carving, and making the building appear more white to the eye. The fact that the Elgin Marbles were indoors gave them some protection, but nineteenth century London, with its rapidly changing weather, its rain and humidity, and the carbon dioxide and sulphur smoke and soot belched from the factories, the steam trains, and the millions of domestic coal fires, was probably the most damaging environment that had ever existed anywhere in the world. Gas burners were installed in the galleries by 1859, and they too must have caused plenty of soot and other air pollution in the galleries.[33]

Although the Marbles were regularly washed, one effect

of the soot was to darken the surfaces as the dirty water penetrated into the porous surface of the marble. Since soot is oily and sticky, another effect of washing and wiping them was to give the surfaces the appearance of polished grey or brown. The Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington is one of many galleries round the world which decorated its main public room with white casts of the Elgin Marbles. If you visit the Brooklyn Museum of Art in New York, where some of the casts from the Metropolitan Museum have been restored to their original whiteness, they are put on show as works of art in their own right. To members of the public in the nineteenth century whose main previous experience of marble sculpture was modern works made of white Italian marble or white plaster casts, a visit to the Elgin Marbles could be a disappointment. Many Victorians wanted the Elgin Marbles to be more clean and more white. They wanted the originals to be more like the reproductions.

Right from the beginning, therefore, we see a tension between two other competing aesthetic approaches, which struggled with one another alongside the debate about the Winckelmann purity of white versus shocking polychromy. On the one hand we have the aristocratic ideal of Lord Elgin, offering the best to the people so that they could learn from it. On the other we see an emerging, more consumerist, approach to art, that museums should give the public what the public wants and expects.

The consumerist ethic was well represented by Westmacott, the man who regarded coloured statues as opening the way to sexual immorality, and who had the private commercial contract from the British Museum to supply and sell casts. Charles Fellows, the discoverer of the Lycian marbles, accused him of trying to make those sculptures look more Greek, that is, less oriental than they actually were, by removing the colour which had been visible when they were excavated. Westmacott was also said to

have sawn off part of the carving on one of the Lycian marbles so that the piece could be made to stand up more steadily and more straight in the Museum.[34] So what happened to the Marbles physically when they went into trusteeship in the British Museum in London? The first point to note is that there is no published history of the Elgin Marbles during their time in the British Museum, although there is a useful book about the history of how they have been displayed.[35] What I have to say about their physical state therefore is based on what I have been able to discover working on my own, but also drawing on the knowledge and expertise of others. It is necessarily provisional, and subject to amendment, and I welcome comments from those who have greater knowledge and expertise.

Damage was done, for example, when the Marbles were moulded to make plaster casts. With the most admired pieces, moulds were made at least twice by methods which involved rubbing the surfaces with strong soap, oil, and acid. The effect, as was recognized quite soon, was to destroy all the residual traces of polychromy that were previously still visible on the surfaces, and a halt was ordered to the making of new moulds from the originals. The acid would also have dissolved some of the patina. It must also have entered the marble, which is a highly porous material, preparing the way for further damage.

In 1858, against the advice of the official Keeper of Antiquities of the day, Westmacott secured the approval of the Trustees for a drastic programme of cleaning. The Marbles were to be scrubbed with brushes on a continuous cycle, using fuller's earth, a clay consisting of small gritty particles, formerly used for taking the oil and grease out of wool and as an ingredient in certain soaps and cleansing preparations. The cleaning qualities of fuller's earth are due to its mildly abrasive physical qualities rather than to its chemical composition. In 1858 the Elgin Marbles

underwent a change of appearance, and there were complaints about vandalism which remained unanswered. Whether any damage was done to the surfaces can only be estimated. It seems likely that more of the surface was lost and the crispness of the carving further eroded.

Later the galleries were kept as hot as hot water pipes could make them in an attempt to dry out the air and make the soot settle in solid form. For a while the frieze and other pieces were put in hermetically sealed glass cases, to be taken out once a year and carefully washed with warm water applied with a sponge, but in the absence of air conditioning, hermetic sealing simply sealed in the polluting air.

An engraving of a slab from the North frieze, depicting a prancing horse, was especially admired.[36] The engraving is intended to be a faithful representation of the slab as it existed when the drawing was made, not a restored or idealized version.[37] The author of the first catalogue wrote: "This slab is very well sculptured and a great part of the surface in good preservation."[38]

Nobody seeing the slab as it exists today could now claim that the surface is in good preservation. About a quarter of the surface has gone from the figures, the horses, and the background. Most of the damage had already occurred when the first published photographs were taken some time before 1872.[39] Much of the same damage is also visible on the cast made from moulding some time after 1837. There are other pieces whose surfaces were described in the first catalogues as being then in good condition but which no longer matched that description within a few years. The deterioration in the surfaces was never publicly reported or admitted.

Let me now turn to Duveen. In 1928, the British Government accepted an offer from a millionaire picture dealer, Sir Joseph, later Lord Duveen, to finance the building of new exhibition galleries at the Tate Gallery and the

British Museum. Lord Duveen's fortune had been built by buying old pictures in Europe and selling them in the United States. Bernard Berenson, the art historian with whom Duveen had a secret financial partnership, supplied misleading professional attributions. It was suspected at the time and is now known for certain that he shamelessly modified the pictures he bought to make them more attractive. Old master paintings were stripped, repainted, and coated with varnish, and Duveen would deny that there had been any intervention. The National Gallery In Washington, I believe, contains many pictures which he ruined. Duveen knew the power of money, and was unscrupulous. When the Nazis came to power in Germany, for example, he set up a front company to help them sell pictures taken from German galleries.[40] As Berenson admitted after Duveen's death, with the residual shame of an insider who had shared in the conspiracies and the spoils, he "stood at the center of a vast circular nexus of corruption that reached from the lowliest employee of the British Museum right up to the King."[41] The Trustees of the British Museum knew the man they were dealing with and were well warned. For example, as early as 1931, one of the Trustees recorded the following remark in his diary. "Duveen…has destroyed more old masters by overcleaning than anybody else in the world, and now he tells us that all old marbles should be thoroughly cleaned — so thoroughly that he would dip them into acid. Fancy…we listened patiently to these boastful follies…" [42]

As the Duveen gallery was being built, during which time the Marbles were mostly not on public view, Duveen was allowed to have his own agents in the Museum. Against the professional ethics of the curatorial profession, they were given their own keys, so that they could go in and out of the galleries and workshops whenever they chose. They also gave orders directly to the Museum workmen. Duveen, apart from his many other

failings, adhered to the old fallacy that the Parthenon sculptures had originally been white. As part of the price for his donation he insisted that they should be thoroughly cleaned.

The cleaning programme carried out by the Museum's workmen, which started in June 1937, involved washing the sculptures in the approved way with water and a neutral soap. But, responding to Duveen's known wishes to make the sculptures more white, and encouraged by bribes, the Museum's workmen also used copper chisels to help to change the colour of some parts of the sculptures which were not sufficiently whitened by the washing. In order to do this they had to remove a layer from the surface of the marble. Cesare Brandi, an Italian conservation expert, believed that chisels had been used on some pieces to sharpen the contrast between the carved figures in relief and the background, but this has not been confirmed.[43] The workmen also used carborundum (silicon carbide), an artificial abrasive, at that time next to diamond the hardest substance known to science, in order to scrape and, therefore whiten, some of the surfaces. Again, until there is a full study, the extent of the losses and damage cannot be assessed. What seems certain is that the carborundum was used, in many cases, to rub off the surface layer of reddish or brown patina which, unlike the surface dirt, would not have been removed by washing. The men who used chisels and abrasives on the Elgin Marbles in 1937 and 1938 were mostly unskilled mason's labourers who were not entitled, by the rules of the trade, to use tools of any kind on any kind of stone in any circumstances.[44] They would not, for example, have been allowed to use chisels on paving stones in the street.

When eventually the Museum staff were alerted to the fact that some of the newly cleaned Marbles showed the "somewhat raw" appearance which results from loss of surface, an investigation was ordered.[45] A number of pedi-

mental pieces were then found on the work benches with the incriminating tools and abrasives alongside. The workmen had made no attempt to conceal the methods they were using, thinking that by pleasing Duveen and his agents, they were doing what was expected by their superiors. The official curators, having for over a year effectively abdicated responsibility for the Marbles to Duveen and his agents, noticed nothing amiss on their occasional visits, apparently believing that the newly emerging whiteness was the result of washing.

The secret internal Board of Enquiry made no attempt to investigate the damage to the Marbles other than those actually found on the benches, although the metopes and frieze were also known to have been damaged. When they learned that chisels had been used for cleaning the marble antiquities in the Museum for as long as anyone could remember, they again shut their eyes and ears. Instead, the Trustees decided to conceal the extent of what had happened both from the British Government and from the public.

Part of the cover-up was physical: those raw white crystalline marble surfaces which had been exposed by the chisels were hurriedly coated over with some kind of coloured wax. A fence was put in the gallery to prevent viewers from getting too near. But the main response was misinformation. Misleading stories of what had happened were given to Parliament and planted in the press. Let me quote one of the statements made to Parliament by a British Minister at the time, on the advice of the Trustees, which appears to deny that any damage had occurred: "I am assured, however, that the effects are imperceptible to anyone but an expert and I think it follows that the intrinsic beauty of the marbles has not been impaired…if any damage has been done, it is completely imperceptible to ordinary people like ourselves, and I very much doubt whether it is very obvious to experts."[46]

We can contrast that with a quotation from the official report which the Trustees had in their hands at the time when they advised the Minister: "The effect of the method employed in cleaning the sculptures has been to remove the surface of the marble and to impart to it a smooth and white appearance. Mr. Pryce described the Selene's horse's head as having been 'skinned.' The surface of the sculptures, showing the evidences of two thousand years of exposure to the climate of Greece, was a document of the utmost importance. There being no possible doubt about the history of the Parthenon sculptures, they came to the Museum as authentic masterpieces of Greek work of the fifth century B.C. and for purposes of study and comparison they are of inestimable value. The damage which has been caused is obvious and cannot be exaggerated."[47]

By this time it was 1939. Everyone now knew that war was imminent and that London was likely to be bombed. The Marbles were hurriedly transferred to safe storage in the vaults of the British Museum and in a disused underground station deep under London. Apart from one brief interval they were not on show for twelve years. By the time they re-emerged after the war, most people had forgotten what they once looked like. Only a handful of people saw them during the brief interval before the war. One of them was Lord Duveen, who died shortly afterwards, whose recent remarks were noted by an obituarist: "And now," he continued, "at the British Museum I am doing the best thing I have ever done and the one which has given me the greatest pleasure." And so he told of his delight in the new setting he was providing for the Elgin Marbles and of months spent in finding the perfect background for them. It was to be masterfully simple and subservient. "At last," he claimed, "they will be seen for what they are." To him these sculptures stood supreme above all other human work, and he dwelt on them with the reverence of love and youth. He believed that cleansed they would come as a rev-

elation to the world. "Wait until you see them with the London grime removed and in their first purity. They will be luminous. To me there never was any loveliness in dirt." [48]

Another was Robert Byron, an art historian who was to lose his life in the war: "Anyone who knows the patina of Pentelic marble, who has run his hands over the knife-like edges of the Parthenon or the objects in the Acropolis Museum and felt those innumerable tiny asperities and translucencies which make that stone the most vivid material that ever rewarded a carver's skill, can see at once that the marbles in Lord Duveen's new gallery have lost this patina. The lustre and the gentleness have vanished. The lumps of stone remain, robbed of life, dead as casts."[49] So what happened to the Marbles? Since no investigation has ever been held, or report given, into the changes to the surfaces, whether resulting from the Duveen scraping or from other interventions, any assessment, whether from inside or outside the Museum, needs to await a full scientific and historic inquiry. Since archaeologists, art historians, and other scholars are concerned at the compromising of the primary sources of their research, several seminars and international conferences have since been called to consider these questions, including one announced by the British Secretary of State for Culture, Media, and Sport, Chris Smith M.P., in the British Parliament as part of the official response to my book.[50] At this stage I offer only a few provisional examples.

The damage to the two pieces of the Helios group from the east pediment, which represent the sun god in his chariot breaking through the waves at dawn, is among the fully documented and, as they exist today, the most obvious. The head of the horse of Selene from the east pediment, one of the pieces whose complex historic surface seems to have been largely intact until Duveen, was in 1938 described as having been "skinned." As the piece now exists, it is noticeably whiter than the adjoining pedimental

pieces which until Elgin's time stood alongside it in the pediment, and shows scarcely any trace of brown surface even in the deep recesses of the mouth. The official report refers to the damage to the Iris. Much of the lower part of this figure can now be seen to be unnaturally and consistently white. Plenderleith, the Museum's scientist had been particularly concerned about the fragility of this figure, being worried even at the risks if it were to be washed, but, perhaps because it flatters a populist view of what Greek sculpture should look like, it was one of the pieces which Duveen was personally most eager to see made more white.

The slab from the west frieze [detailed on the front cover of this publication] was, from the time of the earliest travellers, always regarded as artistically among the best.[51] The only piece from the relatively well preserved west frieze which Elgin was able to remove, it is among the best known of the Elgin Marbles, often selected as iconic for the whole collection.[52] Although, by Elgin's time, the front horse had lost part of one leg, and the rear horse some of its back legs, it was universally recognized as one of the best preserved in the whole collection. When the slab was drawn by one of Elgin's artists before it left Athens, he showed the surface as still intact.[53] As the author of the first official catalogue noted, when the slab was first described and drawn, it was then: ". . . in very good preservation, but notwithstanding, in a very dangerous state, for in some parts the marble is hollow underneath the surface, like a blister; the external form remains unaltered, but any slight accident, almost any sudden or great change of temperature, might be exceedingly injurious." [54]

A cast made from the first official set of moulds, made around 1817, which is high on a gallery wall in the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool, shows a large piece about as large as a man's hand missing from the side of the front horse's belly. By the time the second official set of moulds

was made after 1837 a second large flake had broken off from the horse's flank. A popular book on the Elgin Marbles published in 1833 had its text hurriedly altered to reflect the fact that the picture no longer matched the original.[55] By 1851, the slab was officially redescribed as "blistered," but without any other acknowledgement of the recent loss of surface.[56] In the photographs of the slab taken from the 1870's until the late 1930's, the two craters caused by the flaking still appear round and sharp, with a small third crater developing, but after Duveen we can see further damage. The second crater has now joined with the third, and another piece of marble, of about two cubic centimetres or more, has been splintered off from the side of the horse and is now lost. The attempts to whiten the surface had produced a variegated pattern such as we would expect if the workmen rubbed into the surface to try to achieve a more uniform white. The background has lost the darker patches visible on earlier photographs. Compared with earlier photographs, the crisp carving on the front rider's hair looks more blunted, and as on other slabs, parts of the horse's neck seem to have been whitened.[57] It is likely that this is the slab which was said to have been cleaned twice with metal tools by the workmen to put on a show of whiteness for Lord Duveen and his friends.

Once the history of the Marbles while in London is better recorded and understood, it may then become possible to review the implications for our understanding of the sculptures and of Greek art. On the key central slab of the east frieze, for example, the early cataloguers noted the presence of metallic rust on the head of the male figure, probably the remains of a wreath.[58] The Parthenon frieze has been generally assumed to represent the festival of the Great Panathenaia, and the male figure read as a priest receiving the sacred peplos. If however we read the central scene, as Professor Joan Connelly has suggested, as the sac-

rifice of the daughters of Erechtheus, then the figure represents the grieving king dressed to perform the sacrifice.[59] I do not know whether the presence or absence of a wreath would make one interpretation more likely than another, but in the absence of any account of the physical changes, none of the modern commentators seems to be aware that their predecessors saw traces of a wreath, and they do not therefore discuss the possible interpretative significance.

As another example, in 1988 Ian Jenkins and A. P. Middleton published an article in which, by a close analysis of the surviving patina, they identified a dark patch on the back of one of the pedimental pieces as a trial brush stroke of a fifth century artist. This discovery, which related to a piece which had not touched when the 1937-38 cleaning programme was hurriedly halted in September 1938, both illustrates the importance of preserving the historic surfaces, and also gives an indication of what potential knowledge was lost by the abrading of the historic surfaces of other pieces.[60] Once the changes are more fully understood, it will also become easier to re-imagine how the sculptures may have appeared, not only in antiquity, but to the artists and writers of the romantic and Victorian periods.

It is understandable that in December 1938 the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, recently back from his meeting with Hitler at Munich but certain that he would soon have to take his country into a war of unforeseeable horror, should not have given high priority to the damage to some old stones in the British Museum. Revealing the truth about what had happened to the Elgin Marbles, even in the highly selective version contained in the official report, would, among other consequences, have opened up a row with Greece, a traditional ally. Such matters were best postponed to more normal times. In 1940, when the war was going badly, the British Government considered promising Greece a return of the Marbles after the war, a

promise akin to the offer of post-dated independence to India made at the same time for similar reasons, but the idea was kept too vague to be bankable.

After the war, when any justification for official dishonesty attributable to national emergency had passed, the policy of saying nothing and deflecting attention was continued. But in the new circumstances it could not be sustained without increasing the element of deception. Ministers were advised by the Trustees to repeat the old forms of words about legal rescue and careful stewardship, but unlike Chamberlain, without being given any opportunity to judge the truth for themselves. Official papers show, for example, that Prime Minister Harold Macmillan was not told anything about the pre-war damage when he was advised to assure Parliament that the Marbles had been well cared for.[61]

A few days before my book was published, the British Parliament was assured that: "the Parthenon sculptures were legally and properly acquired. They have been kept in very good condition; very great care has been taken of them ever since."[62] These claims had been reiterated many times before by ministerial predecessors, but a spokesman told journalists on June 7, 1998, that the Minister had not been aware of the damage caused to the sculptures when he made his statement.[63] Until 1996 successive generations of the Trustees ordered that the public records relating to the episode should be kept closed. Successive generations of post-war curatorial staff were thus prevented from learning about the recent history of the Marbles they were appointed to curate, except from what they could pick up informally and by gossip from those who knew or who suspected something. The public was also refused access. Under the Public Records Acts, the withholding of the records from the public, and therefore from the staff, became illegal in 1969.

The present Trustees have claimed that the Duveen

episode "has always been in the public domain."[64] The choice of this phrase is strange since it is usually used in the sense of previously restricted documents becoming available for public use, for example a work coming out of copyright or public documents being opened to historical research under the terms of the Public Records Acts. The key historical fact about the Duveen episode is that the facts and relevant public records were withheld from the public domain. Even if the phrase "public domain" is used in a more general sense, neither the main facts about the Duveen episode, nor the fact that damage was done, have been generally known.

No official statement of any kind, apart from the misleading answers given to Parliament in 1939, was offered until 1998. None of the officially published British Museum guides or books written by members, or former members, of staff mentions the episode in even the most oblique terms.[65] There has been no mention of the episode or of its effects, even described as "cleaning," in any of the post-war monographs written by others with the acknowledged co-operation of the Museum staff, who might reasonably have expected the facts to be brought to their attention.[66] In some works on the Parthenon written with the acknowledged help of the British Museum staff, misleading statements have gone uncorrected. For example, in a chapter entitled "Damage and Conservation," Frank Brommer, author of the fullest series of books on the Parthenon sculptures so far published, in 1977 contrasted the damage being done by the weather to the sculptures which were then still on the building in Athens, with the "fact that at least the sculptures in the British Museum have been spared further damage."[67] Sir John Boardman in 1985 said that the sculptures which reached London "are in virtually as good condition now as they were when they were removed."[68] Until 1984, the late Melina Mercouri,

the Greek Minister of Culture, relying on official British statements and on the published literature, was among many who were mistakenly led to believe that the Parthenon Marbles had been well cared for while in London.[69] The Duveen episode, therefore, now also raises questions about another type of authenticity. The statement issued by the Trustees of the British Museum shortly after the publication of my book, to the effect that anyone who was surprised at the apparent contradiction between my history and official statements had not done his or her homework, has caused widespread puzzlement, as well as other emotions, in the United Kingdom and abroad. The statements are also used in official British Government responses to foreign governments and in dealings with international organizations such as UNESCO. What in my book was a historical matter has therefore been turned into a current matter of public accountability, duties of trustees, and academic standards.

Since the Elgin Marbles first went into trust in 1816, no official account has ever been given of the mishaps and disasters they have suffered or of the interventions to which they have been subjected. No enquiry has ever been made, or report published, about their changing physical state. From 1816 until the time of writing, it has never been officially admitted that any of the Elgin Marbles has suffered any damage of any kind at any time while in the Museum's care. All the standard books on the subject are either silent or they give a misleading impression. These facts tell us a good deal about how generations of Trustees of the British Museum have seen their role.

From the time of the acquisition of the Marbles, the claim to own the Marbles has been accompanied by a simple legitimating narrative. An honourable, well-deserved, responsibility had been legally assumed and was being conscientiously and effectively exercised on behalf of the civilized world. This narrative, which originated with Lord

Elgin and was taken over by Parliament and transferred to the Trustees with the Marbles, had a close parallel in the justificatory ideology of the British Empire which was sometimes made explicit. It is characteristic of such narratives to present the implied hierarchy of centre and periphery as one of permanence and normality. In the case of the Parthenon sculptures this took the form of regarding the rescued Elgin Marbles which had arrived in London as the centre and the parts remaining in Athens as the (as yet) unrescued periphery. Thus we hear Victorian archaeologists talking, without irony, about the possibility of Greece 'restoring' any fragments which were newly discovered in excavations in Athens to their place in London.[70] Ever since the Elgin Marbles have been in the British Museum, the Trustees and their staff have curated the rescue-and-stewardship-story with the same pride as they have curated the stones themselves.

When Arthur Hamilton Smith wrote the first researched historical account based on the Elgin family papers in 1916, he was able to confirm the main features of the story; and the instances of self-censorship which I have found in his work do not detract significantly from the reliability of his account.[71] The test for stewards and trustees is, however, not when their legitimating story is broadly true and widely accepted as a fair historical account, but when things go wrong and it ceases to be true. The historical record shows that the Trustees of 1939, when faced with what they saw as a stark choice between being truthful about the Marbles or trying to maintain public confidence in the stewardship narrative, dishonestly chose to try to prop up the narrative. The Trustees of 1984, when their turn came, also preferred the story to the stones, and in denying access to the historical records, they added illegality to an already long list of failures and irregularities. When my book came out in 1998 the present generation of Trustees had the best and easiest opportunity that had

occurred since 1939 to put the whole disgraceful Duveen business behind them, to enable the actual history of the Marbles to be investigated and made public, and to enable honest scholarship to resume. However, in a remarkable example of how imperial discourses have persisted long after the dismantling of the British Empire, the present generation of Trustees, when their turn came, have also chosen to reiterate the same responses as their predecessors, and have, it seems, at least for the time being, persuaded the British Government to do the same.

The Elgin Marbles, besides the many other cultural property issues for which they remain the classic case, now therefore make a new claim to our attention. The Marbles now offer a well documented case study of how a rescue-and-stewardship mythic narrative was created, sustained and internalized over a period of nearly two centuries, how the perceived need to keep it publicly believable drew generations of Trustees and their staffs ever deeper into concealment, equivocation, illegality, and misinformation, and how they were able to pursue this course without being exposed because of the privileged lack of direct accountability inherent in the trusteeship system.

The Parthenon, a building originally erected to celebrate the religious and civic identity of the free citizens of the city of Athens, was successively assigned new meanings; for example, as an affirmation of pan- Hellenic cultural supremacy, of the benevolence of the Roman Empire, of the triumph of Christianity (Greek Orthodox and then Roman Catholic), and of the triumph of Islam. In the nineteenth century it became the cultural focus of the emerging Modern Greek nation, of the romantic ideal of perfection, and of the debt of western civilization to its ancient teachers. In the twentieth century it is increasingly perceived and proclaimed as a monument to western liberal democracy. The long history illustrates vividly the assertion of fictional pedigrees of legitimation, the con-

struction of group identities, the differences between heritage and history, centre and periphery, changing notions of the purpose of art, and changing perceptions of the sacred and of the authentic. The Parthenon and its sculptures have been frequently re-invented, refashioned, and reinterpreted, and the changing meanings conferred on them have led to actual physical changes in the stones themselves. The Parthenon and its sculptures continue therefore to be a central case not only for cultural property, but also for some of the most difficult, and also most important, questions in the study of the humanities. That is their fascination and, ultimately, their value. The Trustees of the British Museum are, in their own words, "responsible for promoting the greatest possible understanding of all archaeological and historical aspects of the sculpture of the Parthenon."[72] It is surely now time for those who claim to be the guardians of this trust to be willing to face their own history.■

Notes

[1] A longer version of this article which made available other new source material, and discusses the implications at greater length, was published in the fall of 1999 in the *International Journal of Cultural Property*.

[2] The collection purchased from Lord Elgin by the 1816 Act of the British Parliament also included other antiquities, including marble sculptures and architectural pieces from the other buildings on the Acropolis, inscriptions, vases, and many other ancient objects obtained by Elgin and his agents in many places elsewhere in the territory of what is now Greece and Turkey, as well as casts and drawings.

[3] Readers should, however, be warned against the books by Theodore Vrettos, *The Elgin Affair,* (Arcade New York, and Secker and Warburg London 1998), and its predecessor, *A Shadow of Magnitude* (Putnam, New York 1974). They both con-

tain passages and summaries which closely follow the wording of earlier editions of my *Lord Elgin and the Marbles*, but Vrettos also has also added passages of fictional invention masquerading as original contemporary documents; he has altered the wording of genuine original documents published in earlier editions of *Lord Elgin and the Marbles* so that the meaning is reversed to fit his argument; and he has made unsustainable claims that his book is based on original research. For example, for his claim to have consulted the papers of Elgin's secretary Philip Hunt, (which have been kept in a box under my bed for more than twenty years), and other examples of his so-called research methods, see the letter published in the [London] *Times Literary Supplement* July 10, 1998, and other published correspondence around that time. In 1998, the British publishers of *The Elgin Affair* withdrew the book and paid a sum of money in partial recompense to my publishers.

4 See especially John Henry Merryman, "Thinking about the Elgin Marbles," 1881 (83 *Michigan Law Review* , 83 1985), and "The Nation and the Object," 61 (1.3 *International Journal of Cultural Property* 1994).

5 See, for example, the collection of essays in *Antiquities, Trade or Betrayed, Legal, Ethical, and Conservation Issues* (Kathryn Walker Tubb, editor, Archetype, London 1995), and Patrick J. O'Keefe, *Trade in Antiquities, Reducing Destruction and Theft* (UNESCO, Paris and Archetype, London 1997).

6 Introduction, *Antiquities, Trade or Betrayed.*

7 See the excellent series of articles in *The Parthenon and Its Impact on Modern Times* (Panayotis Tournikiotis general editor, Melissa, Athens 1995).

8 Robert Smirke in a letter to his father October 6, 1803, manuscript, Library of Royal Institute of British Architects, London.

9 For an excellent summary of the historical discovery of ancient polychromy, and of modern opinion, with references to earlier sources, see Ian Jenkins, and A. P. Middleton, Paint on the Parthenon Sculptures, 183 (83 *Annual of British School at Athens* London 1988). The discovery of polychromy is also summarized

by David van Zanten, The Parthenon Imagined Painted in *The Parthenon and Its Impact on Modern Times* (Panayotis Tournikiotis general editor, Melissa, Athens 1995).

10 *A Description of the Ancient Marbles in the British Museum*, VIII, p. 91 (British Museum, London 1830-1839).

11 Many in *The Parthenon and Its Impact on Modern Times* (Panayotis Tournikiotis general editor, Melissa, Athens 1995).

12 For a discussion of the effects of the clear light by a photographic artist made before air pollution arrived in Athens, see Alexander Liberman, *Greece, Gods, and Art, Texts and Commentaries on the Photographs by Iris C. Love. Introduction by Robert Graves*, pp. 12 & 43 (Collins, London 1968).

13 See Theodore Skoulikides, Protection of Marble against Atmospheric Pollution Using Mechanisms Based on the Mechanics of Decay, *National Technical University, Publication 99, in Honour of Professor Theodore Skoulikides* (National Technical University, Faculty of Chemical Engineering, Athens 1995). "The severe deterioration (of the Caryatids of the Erechtheion) began between 1955 and 1965, that coincides with the intense industrialization of the Athens area." Professor Skoulikides made his estimate from a detailed comparison of the changing surface using photographs and casts.

14 The term used by Vitruvius, *De Architectura*, VII, 9, 3, writing long after the Parthenon was built but before the ancient tradition was broken.

15 For a summary of scientific findings about the changing surfaces of Pentelic marble, see the essays in the official publication *Conservation of the Surface of the Acropolis Monuments* (Committee for the Preservation of the Acropolis Monuments, Athens 1994).

16 For the ambiguous and sometimes misleading use of the term 'patina,' especially as it has been applied to the changing colours of paint and varnish on European oil pictures, see Thomas Brachert, *Patina, Von Nutzen und Nachteil der Restaurierung* (Callwey, Munich 1985) and the essays in *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage*

(Nicholas Stanley Price, M. Kirby Tally, Jr., and Alessandra Melucco Vaccaro, editors, Getty Conservation Institute, Los Angeles 1996). The essay by J. Larson, Sculpture Conservation; Treatment or Reinterpretation,*Sculpture Conservation: Preservation or Interference?* (Philip Lindley editor, Scolar, Aldershot 1997) is mainly concerned with the 'patina' caused by the settling of surface dirt on modern marble statues which were always intended to look white.

17 C. R. Cockerell's phrase, quoted by Ian Jenkins and A.P. Middleton, Paint on the Parthenon Sculptures, p. 187.

18 William Bell Dinsmoor, *The Architecture of Ancient Greece, Revised and Enlarged edition, by William J. Anderson and R. Phené Spiers*, p. 180 (Batsford London 1950).

19 *Ibid*, p. 192.

20 *De Pythiae Oraculis*, p. 395 (Frank Cole Babbitt, editor and translator, Plutarch's *Moralia*, Loeb edition, Heinemann, London and Putnam, New York 1936), p. 261. Also discussed by Phoebe Dent Weil, A Review of the History and Practice of Patination [ie adding artificial patina] in *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage*, p. 394.

21 Life of Pericles, xiii.

22 If so, it is tempting to read the emerging brown, which is likely to have been most visible on those parts of the sculptures which represented unclothed parts of the young male human bodies, and which seem to have been left unpainted, as being an increasingly a realistic colour. As is explained in one of Lucian's dialogues, the Hellenic young men, who were both athletes and soldiers, were proud that they, unlike the women, had been 'darkened by the sun.' Lucian, IV, *Loeb Classical Library*, (Heinemann, London and Putnam, New York 1925) p. 43 from *Anacharsis, or Athletics*. However, since the female as well as the male sculptured figures of the Parthenon would have been subject to the same changes, the temptation can be resisted. In general the convention appears to have been to distinguish between male and female by showing the latter as white. For example the metopes of Temple E at Selinus, which are otherwise of local

limestone, use white marble for the exposed flesh of the females, but not of the males. I am grateful to Professor Stephen G. Miller for these references.

23 *Memorandum on the Earl of Elgin's Pursuits in Greece*, (Privately Printed, Edinburgh, and John Murray, London 1811 and later editions).

24 Quoted by Alex Potts, The impossible ideal: Romantic conceptions of the Parthenon sculptures in early nineteenth century Britain and Germany, p. 114, *Art in Bourgeois Society, 1790-1850* (Andrew Hemingway and William Vaughan editors, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998) from *Sketches of the Principal Picture-Galleries of England*, 55 (London, 1824).

25 *On Seeing the Elgin Marbles*.

26 E. Q. Visconti, *Two Memoirs...on the Sculptures in the Collection of the Earl of Elgin*, published with the *Report of the Select Committee on the Elgin Marbles*, p. 98 (Murray, London 1816).

27 *The Elgin Marbles... selected from Stuart's and Revett's Antiquities of Athens...with Report of Select Committee*, (London 1816). That the marbles were 'chaste' was also noted by Richard Lawrence, *Elgin Marbles from the Parthenon at Athens*, p. 3, (Printed for the Subscribers by Thomas Davison, London 1818).

28 Henry C. Shelley, *The British Museum, Its History and Treasures* , 183, 198 (L.C. Page, London and Boston 1911).

29 Walter Pater, *The Renaissance*, 140 (Oxford University Press, Adam Phillips editor, Oxford 1986)

30 Richard Westmacott, *Handbook of Sculpture, Ancient and Modern*, vii (Edinburgh 1864). For Westmacott's professional career as a sculptor, see *Dictionary of British Sculptors, 1660-1851*, 428 (Rupert Gunnis editor, Odhams Press, London 1953).

31 See Athena S. Leoussi, *Nationalism and Classicism. The Classical Body as National Symbol in Nineteenth-Century England and France* (Macmillan, Basingstoke 1998), especially the discussion in chapter 1 of the theories of Robert Knox. Among Knox's works which discuss the ancient Greeks see, for example, *The*

Races of Mankind, (London 1850), especially p. 400ff, and 596. For his reputation, influence, and incitements to genocide, see the summary in Martin Bernal, *Black Athena*, 341 (Free Association Press, London 1991). Knox wrote widely on artistic anatomy, and his examples of 'an innate love of truth, of fine forms, of the perfect, and of the beautiful' which he attributed to his idealized ancient Greek race were mainly drawn from the Elgin Marbles. See, for example, his *Great Artists and Great Anatomists, A Biographical and Philosophical Study*, p. 137ff (London, 1852); and *A Manual of Artistic Anatomy for the Use of Sculptors, Painters, and Amateurs*, pp. 34, 134, 172ff (London, 1852).

32 Quoted by Ian Jenkins, *Archaeologists & Aesthetes in the Sculpture Galleries of the British Museum 1800-1939*, p. 75 (British Museum, London 1992).

33 Jenkins, *Archaeologists & Aesthetes*, p. 53.

34 See the exchanges in *Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Management, Constitution and Government of the British Museum*, XXIV, especially pp. 40-42, 65, 67, 75, 86, 87, "they had been in the hands of the mason to the Museum and cleaned by him." (Parliamentary Papers, London 1850).

35 Ian Jenkins, *Archaeologists & Aesthetes in the Sculpture Galleries of the British Museum 1800-1939*, (British Museum, London 1992)

36 North Frieze XXXIII, according to the proposed renumbering suggested in Ian Jenkins, *The Parthenon Frieze*, (London, British Museum, 1994) but currently still numbered XXXVIII in the Museum.

37 In the Introductions to *Ancient Marbles* Henry Corbould, the artist, is praised for his "fidelity," and it can be seen from some of the differentiated shading in some of the engravings that he and the other artists and engravers attempted to represent the Marbles as they existed, including the damaged surfaces.

38 *Ancient Marbles*, 101 and 109.

39 See *British Museum, Grecian Antiquities, photographed by*

Stephen Thompson, 2 volumes (Mansell, London 1872).

[40] See the full account by Colin Simpson, *The Partnership, The Secret Association of Bernard Berenson and Joseph Duveen*, pp. 164, 243 (Bodley Head, London 1987).

[41] Quoted by Simpson, *Partnership*, p. 3.

[42] Lord Crawford, Trustee of the British Museum, reporting a meeting to discuss plans for the new gallery. *The Crawford Papers. The Journals of David Lindsay, Twenty-seventh Earl of Crawford and Tenth of Balcarres, 1871 - 1940 during the years 1892 to 1940*, edited by John Vincent, p. 537 (Manchester University Press, Manchester 1984).

[43] Cesare Brandi, 'Nota sui Marmi del Partenone' in *Bolletino dell' Istituto Centrale de Restauro* 3-4, (Rome, 1950), pp. 3-8.

[44] The prohibition on the labourers using tools is noted in a passage of the Report of the Board of Enquiry due to be published in a forthcoming article in the *International Journal of Cultural Property*.

[45] Roger Hinks, *The Gymnasium of the Mind, The Journals of Roger Hinks 1933-1963* p. 54 (Michael Russell, Salisbury 1984).

[46] Answer given by Captain Crookshank, M.P., Financial Secretary to the Treasury, to a question in the House of Commons, May 20, 1939.

[47] From the report of the Board of Enquiry, first published in *Lord Elgin and the Marbles*, (third revised edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1998).

[48] *The Times*, May 26, 1939

[49] From a letter by Lord Byron to *Sunday Times*, May 14, 1939.

[50] Parliamentary Report, Commons, June 17, 1998. The conference, which has a narrow remit, has been arranged for November 30/December 1, 1999 in London. As the draft programme stands at the time of writing, the list of official invitees excludes two of the organizations with most experience of Pentelic marble, the Greek Archaeological Service and the Committee for the Restoration of the Acropolis Monuments. Another conference, I

am advised, is to be called by the Greek authorities in 2,000.

[51] West frieze II.

[52] The cast made by the French archaeologist Fauvel shortly before Elgin removed the original shows the whole piece largely intact. (Illustrated in [Charles Yriarte], *Les frieses du Parthénon, par Phidias, Vingt-deux planches* (Paris 1868) and in Ernst Berger, editor, *Parthenon-Kongress, Referate und Berichte 4. bis 8. April 1982*, 2, 69 (Philipp von Zabern, Mainz 1984). But, to judge from earlier drawings while the piece was still on the building, the cast has been completed. See Dietrich Willers, Ergänzungen an Fauvels Gipsabgüssen vom Parthenonfries, *Parthenon-Kongress*, 1, 343.

[53] See plate 55, reproduced from the original in the British Museum, in Jacob Rothenberg, *"Descensus ad Terram," The Acquisition and Reception of the Elgin Marbles*, (doctoral thesis, Columbia University, New York, 1967, printed Garland, New York 1977).

[54] *Ancient Marbles*, VIII, 129 .

[55] *Elgin and Phigaleian Marbles*, 1, 100. Added, in brackets, squeezed in in small letters in brackets at the foot of the page: "The foremost of the horses has suffered in the flank more than appears in the drawing." Since the printing of this book was done from stereotype plates, any amendment to the text made after the plates were manufactured could only be included by using the margin at the bottom of the page, a fact which implies that the amendment was made late in the production process.

[56] See W. S. Vaux, Assistant in the Department of Antiquities, "this slab...though the surface of the stone is in a very dangerous state, being hollow and blistered in several places, is still in a very perfect state of preservation." *Handbook to the Antiquities in the British Museum*, 76 (Murray, London 1851)

[57] The cast on display in the new Fleischman gallery of the British Museum, opened in 1998, when compared with the original in the Duveen gallery next door, shows the extent of this part of the damage.

58 *Ancient Marbles*, VIII, (1839), 43. A. H. Smith, *Catalogue of Sculpture in the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities* 159 (British Museum, Volume 1, London 1892).

59 Joan B. Connelly, Parthenon and Parthenoi: A Mythological Interpretation of the Parthenon Frieze, 53 *Journal of the Archaeological Institute of America* (100, no 1, January 1996). Summarized in *Lord Elgin and the Marbles*, (third revised edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1998) 54.

60 Ian Jenkins, and A. P. Middleton see footnote 9.

61 For example, T218/168, 1950-1960.

62 Parliamentary Report, Commons, June 1, 1998.

63 BBC wire service, June 7, 1998.

64 In a statement issued in June 1998 and repeated in repeated in reviews, interviews, and official answers to inquiries from the press and public.

65 For example: *A Short Guide to the Sculptures of the Parthenon, (Elgin Collection)*, (British Museum, London 1949), (by Bernard Ashmole) with reissues until 1961. The photographs of the Marbles used in this book were taken before 1937; D. E. L Haynes, (then Keeper) with W. Forman, The *Parthenon Frieze*, (Batchworth Press, London, no date, 1958); P.E. Corbett, *The Sculptures of the Parthenon*, (Penguin, London1959). The photographs of the Marbles used in this book were taken before 1937; *An Historical Guide to the Sculptures of the Parthenon, (Elgin Collection)*, (British Museum, London 1962), (by D. E. L. Haynes, then Keeper) with many reissues, first published at the time of the opening of the Duveen Gallery; Charles Martin Robertson, (former member of staff) with Alison Frantz, *The Parthenon Frieze*, (Phaidon in association with British Museum Publications, London 1975); Cook, B. F., (then Keeper) *The Elgin Marbles*, British Museum booklets, (British Museum, London 1984), with reissues; Ian Jenkins, (member of staff) *Archaeologists & Aesthetes in the Sculpture Galleries of the British Museum 1800-1939*, (British Museum, London 1992); Ian Jenkins, (member of staff) *The Parthenon Frieze*, (British Museum,

London 1994). Most of the photographs of the Marbles used in this book were taken in or before 1910; Cook, B. F., (former Keeper) *The Elgin Marbles*, revised edition, (British Museum, London 1997), still on sale.

66 For example: Nicholas Yalouris, *Classical Greece: The Elgin Marbles of the Parthenon*, (Oldbourne Press, London and New York Graphic Society, New York 1960); Sheila Adam, *The Technique of Greek Sculpture*, (British School of Archaeology at Athens and Thames and Hudson, London 1966); Frank Brommer, *Die Skulpturen der Parthenon-Giebel*, (Philipp von Zabern, Mainz 1963); *Die Metopen des Parthenon*, (Philipp von Zabern, Mainz 1967); *Der Parthenonfries*, (Philipp von Zabern, Mainz 1977); *The Sculptures of the Parthenon*, (Thames and Hudson, London 1979); Sir John Boardman and David Finn, *The Parthenon and its Sculptures*, (Thames and Hudson, London 1985); Olga Palagia, *The Pediments of the Parthenon*, (E.J. Brill, Leiden, New York, Köln 1993); Ernst Berger, und Madeleine Gisler-Huwiter, *Der Parthenon in Basel*, (Philipp von Zabern, Mainz 1996).

67 Frank Brommer,*The Sculptures of the Parthenon*, 14 (Thames and Hudson, London 1979).

68 John Boardman, *The Parthenon and its Sculptures* 216 (Thames and Hudson, London 1985).

69 "This government, in friendship and in appreciation of the excellent care given to the Marbles by the British Museum, does now so ask for this act of international justice." Melina Mercouri, The Case for Sending the Marbles Back Home, *The Times*, January 15, 1983, at 6f. After the partial revelations about the Duveen episode in the Hinks book of 1984, Ms. Mercouri revised her formulation in a speech in Oxford. "I say to the British Government, you have kept those sculptures for almost two centuries. You have cared for them as well as you could, for which we thank you. But now in the name of morality and fairness, please give them back." I am grateful to Mr. Jules Dassin, Ms. Mercouri's widower, for kindly supplying me with the text of the speech. Until the publication of my book, the British Committee for the Restitution of the Parthenon Marbles also

declared in its brochures that "The Marbles have been carefully kept in the British Museum" *Stones of No Value. Monuments of the Gods* (London 1997).

[70] Notably, Charles Newton, later Keeper of Greek and Roman Antiquities in the British Museum. The rightful place of the fragments being discovered in Athens, he wrote when he visited Athens, was with the Elgin Marbles in London "to which they are as essential as leaves torn out of a manuscript are to the book itself." He expressed the hope that, just as some smaller fragments in English private collections had been given to the British Museum, "we may reasonably hope that some of the many fragments recently discovered at Athens, will, in like manner, be restored to their place in the extant parts of the composition." Letter from Newton to W. R. Hamilton, April 18, 1852. Antiquities of Athens and in its Neighborhood, *Transactions of Royal Society of Literature*, (5, NS, London, 1856).

[71] A. H. Smith, Lord Elgin and his Collection, 345 (36 *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 1916).

[72] In a statement issued in June 1998 and repeated in reviews, interviews, and official answers to inquiries from the press and public.

UNESCO and the Parthenon Marbles

David A. Walden

In 1799, Lord Elgin was appointed British Ambassador to Constantinople, the capital of the Ottoman Empire. In 1801, he was granted permission by the Ottoman authorities to make casts of the sculptures of the Acropolis monuments in Athens, and later to remove some of the marbles found lying on the ground, to adorn his home in Scotland. As a result of changes to his personal circumstances - he was imprisoned in France for three years during his return to Scotland and then subsequently divorced from his heiress wife - he agreed to sell the marbles to the British Museum in 1816. Greece was recognized as a sovereign nation in 1833, and almost immediately began to campaign for the return of the marbles. In 1984, after years of unsuccessful bilateral overtures to the Government of the United Kingdom, Greece sought the assistance of UNESCO in obtaining the return of the Parthenon Marbles.

UNESCO - An Overview

In November, 1942, a Conference of Allied Ministers of Education (CAME) from 18 governments began a series of meetings in London, England, which continued until December 1945. Coincident with these meetings, in October 1945, the United Nations Charter was adopted and provided for the establishment of a specialized U.N. agency responsible for culture, science and education. The CAME Ministers strongly supported this initiative and proposed that a United Nations Conference be convened to establish such an organization. This Conference also took

place in London, and on 16 November 1945, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was founded to promote international cooperation, peace and security through education, science and culture.[1] At that time its constitution was signed by 37 countries, although it did not come into force until it was ratified by the 20th Member State (which coincidentally was Greece) in November 1946[2].

UNESCO's mandate is "to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations."[3]

To fulfill this mandate, UNESCO performs five principal functions:

- **prospective studies,** to determine the appropriate forms of education, science, culture and communication required for tomorrow's world;
- **the advancement and sharing of knowledge** through research, training and teaching;
- **standard-setting** through the preparation and adoption of international instruments and statutory recommendations;
- **expertise** provided to Member States in the form of "technical co-operation" for policies and projects related to development; and
- **exchanges of specialized information.**

In practice, these functions take the form of international conventions, agreements, recommendations, and declarations; conferences and meetings; studies and research; publications (books, periodicals and reports); technical and advisory services; staff missions, the provision

of consultants, supplies and equipment; training courses, seminars and workshops; and, grants and financial contributions.[4]

1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property[5]

The 1970 UNESCO *Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property* was the first comprehensive multinational agreement addressing illicit trafficking in cultural property. It was also the first multinational convention aimed exclusively at protecting cultural property in times of peace.

The Convention resulted from appeals to UNESCO in the 1960s by Mexico and Peru for action to protect cultural property after these countries experienced massive losses of heritage objects, principally as a result of the looting of archaeological sites.

The Convention contains a detailed description of the cultural property qualifying for protection, and includes objects that, for religious and secular reasons, are important for the archaeology, prehistory, history, literature art or science of the State Party. These include: flora, fauna, minerals, palaeontological specimens; property relating to the history of science, technology and military and social history; objects recovered from archaeological excavations; monuments or archaeological sites; antiquities more than 100 years old; ethnological objects; pictures, paintings, drawings, sculptures, and prints; decorative art more than 100 years old; rare manuscripts and books; postage and revenue stamps; and, archives, including sound, photographic and cinematographic archives.[6]

The Convention recognizes that the illicit import, export and transfer of ownership of cultural property

impoverishes the culture and history of the countries of origin. It also develops principles and standards, and requires States Parties to the Convention to undertake measures to control exports and take appropriate steps to return cultural property that has been illegally exported from the country of origin.

From an operational perspective, States Parties to the Convention must draft laws and regulations to protect cultural property; establish national inventories; promote the development of institutions to preserve cultural property; supervise archaeological excavations; undertake educational measures to develop respect for cultural property; and, ensure there is appropriate publicity for cultural property that "disappears."

States Parties must also develop export certificates and prohibit the exportation of controlled cultural property without an export certificate, while museums must not acquire cultural property that has been illegally exported from another State Party after entry into force of the Convention. Similarly, the import of cultural property stolen from a museum or religious or secular public monument is prohibited. At the same time the Requesting State may be required to pay "just compensation" to an innocent purchaser or a person who has valid title to an object and must provide, at its expense, the evidence necessary to establish its claim for recovery or return.

The provisions of the 1970 Convention are **not** retroactive, i.e., its provisions only come into force for States Parties after they have acceded to the Convention and only for cultural property illegally exported after that date. As of January 1999, there were 89 States Parties to this Convention but, with the exception of Canada, the United States of America (which requires a separate bilateral or multi-national agreement to implement it) and France, the art importing nations are conspicuously absent from the list of signatory countries.

UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in Case of Illicit Appropriation

The UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in Case of Illicit Appropriation was established in 1978 to promote the return of cultural property and to assist with the implementation of the 1970 UNESCO *Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property*.

The Committee is composed of 22 Member States[7] elected for a four-year term by the UNESCO General Conference. Meetings are held every two years. The role of the Committee is to provide a forum for negotiation, discussion and "consciousness raising" about illicit trafficking and the return of cultural property. The Committee can intervene when bilateral negotiations have already begun between countries, but does so only in an advisory capacity.

Pursuant to Article 4 of the Statutes of the Intergovernmental Committee, its mandate is to:

- seek ways and means of facilitating bilateral negotiations for the restitution or return of cultural property to its countries of origin;
- promote multilateral and bilateral co-operation for the restitution or return of cultural property;
- foster public information campaigns about the nature and scope of the problem of the restitution or return of cultural property;
- guide and plan UNESCO's activities with regard to the return of cultural property;
- encourage the establishment of museums and other institutions for the conservation of cultural property and the training of the necessary scientific and technical personnel;

- promote legitimate exchanges of cultural property for educational, scientific and display purposes.

Offers or requests for the restitution or return of cultural property must be communicated by Member States to the Director General of UNESCO who, in turn, forwards them to the Committee. The Committee then examines the offer or request with a view to seeking ways and means to facilitate bilateral negotiations for the restitution or return of the object(s).

The Greek Request for the Return of the Parthenon Marbles . . .

On September 24, 1984, the Secretariat to the Intergovernmental Committee received a completed "Standard form concerning requests for return or restitution" from the Ministry of Culture of Greece for the return of the Parthenon marbles from the United Kingdom. The Standard form had been created by the Intergovernmental Committee, in consultation with the International Council of Museums (ICOM), to facilitate bilateral negotiations for the restitution or return of cultural property. The form can only be used when bilateral negotiations have already been initiated but have made "unsatisfactory" progress; in other words, consistent with the Committee's mandate, it cannot initiate negotiations for the return of cultural property.

The Greek request provided a detailed description of the approximately 189 metopes, frieze and pedimental figures that had been removed from the Acropolis monuments, how they had been cut into thinner slabs for ease of transportation, damaged as a result of this sawing, transported to England, had spent up to two years on the bottom of the sea as a result of the wreck of one of Lord Elgin's vessels, stored in questionable conditions in London for almost 10 years and ultimately sold to the British Museum

in 1816. Mention was also made of the damage caused by the "cleaning" process in 1938 at the British Museum, but because of restrictions on access to the complete report until 1997, details about the extent of the damage was not known in 1984.

It was argued that to understand the significance of the Parthenon marbles, it was necessary to understand the significance of the Parthenon to the people who had built it and to Greece. To illustrate this, the request quoted the prominent Greek archaeologist, Professor Manolis Andronikos:

"These sculptures belong to the most sacred monument of this country, to the temple of Athena, which expresses the quintessence of the Greek spirit and embodies the ultimate groundwork of Athenian democracy. This monument survives almost entire in its place on the rock of the Acropolis, which constitutes for Greece the symbol of her centuries-old history. And missing from this monument are its most precious parts, which were crudely and forcibly detached just a few years before the flag of the free Greek nation was raised alongside it."[8]

The request then presents five distinct arguments in support of the return of the marbles to Greece:

1. **The sculptures were removed during a period of foreign occupation**, and without the permission of the Greek nation. The occupation of a country by a foreign power does not confer upon the occupier the right to alienate the cultural heritage of the occupied territory. The permission granted to Lord Elgin by the Turkish authorities [sic] to remove the marbles could not, therefore, constitute legal transfer of title.
2. **The Parthenon sculptures form an integral part of a monument** preserved almost in its entirety on the Acropolis. From this monument, the most precious

element - the sculptures - were removed just prior to Greece's national liberation.

3. **The recognition of Greece's right to decide** the best possible methods to preserve the sculptures is a question of national sovereignty, and conservation issues should not be invoked as an argument against restitution. Greece is well advanced in the safeguarding and preservation of the monuments through the application of modern conservation processes, and restoration work can only reach completion when the sculptures are returned.
4. **Arguments relating to atmospheric conditions** or the lack of technology in Greece to conserve ancient monuments are groundless. Archaeological science is well advanced in Greece, and the country possesses the required expertise to ensure the safekeeping of the marbles upon their return.
5. **The Parthenon sculptures are a special case**, as the Parthenon is an internationally recognized symbol of civilization and democracy. The restoration of the Parthenon's integrity would have symbolic value for all of civilization, and would demonstrate the true spirit of cooperation in international cultural relations.

. . . and the British Response

The request was forwarded to the Secretary of the United Kingdom National Commission for UNESCO in October 1984, who in turn forwarded the request to the British Museum. One year later, on October 30, 1985, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs replied on behalf of the Government of the United Kingdom.

The British response provided a history of the preservation of the marbles in the British Museum from the time of their acquisition in 1816 until the present. It noted that the sculptures acquired by Lord Elgin had, from time to

time, been augmented by fragments removed piecemeal by earlier travellers and supplemented by plaster casts of pieces in Athens, Paris, Copenhagen and elsewhere. It also recounted how Sir Joseph (later Lord) Duveen had built a new gallery for the Parthenon sculptures at his own expense which was completed in 1938, how the sculptures had been protected during the Second World War despite severe damage to the Duveen Gallery as a result of bombing, and how ultimately the restored Gallery had been opened to the public in 1962.

In response to the arguments advanced for the return of the marbles in the Greek request, the United Kingdom replied as follows:

1. **The sculptures were <u>not</u> removed during a period of foreign occupation.** Athens had been a part of the territory of the Ottoman Empire since the 15th century, and in 1801 the whole of what is now the Republic of Greece (with the exception of the Ionian islands) was part of the Ottoman Empire. As a result, the Ottoman authorities had sovereign authority over the territory at the time the sculptures were removed.
2. **The Parthenon sculptures in the holdings of the British Museum had once formed part of a monument on the Acropolis**, but pieces of the monument can also now be found in museums in France, Denmark, Germany, Austria, Italy and the Vatican. By inference, the return of the marbles in the collection of the British Museum would not be sufficient to restore the integrity of the Acropolis monuments.
3. **Arguments relating to atmospheric conditions and conservation** are critical to the continued preservation of the marbles. Given the "almost universal degradation" of atmospheric conditions in the world's cities, the display of the sculptures in the open air of any city would result in considerable damage. In the British

Museum, all of the pieces are displayed indoors where a strict atmospheric regime is consistently, and constantly, maintained.

4. **The Parthenon marbles are indeed a symbol of civilization and democracy**, but such collections are not bound by time and place as symbols of the human spirit. Both Greece and the United Kingdom share democratic ideals and practices, and an awareness of both national and world cultures, as is witnessed by opinions about the disposition of the marbles in both countries that differ from those of the respective governments.
5. **The British Museum's collections are vested in its Trustees** in accordance with legislation that, since 1753, has prohibited the permanent disposition of any object (other than duplicates). Similarly, the Trustees are required by law to ensure that the collections are preserved for international scholarship and the enjoyment of the public. As a result, the Museum is open seven days a week, with free admission, and attracts more than three million visitors annually.
6. **The marbles are "ambassadors" for Greece** and are among the most popular of the treasures of the British Museum. They exemplify, in a unique manner, the "aesthetic genius" of classical antiquity which has had a profound effect on the history of mankind, and their display in the Museum is designed to present a complete and integrated picture of the development of culture throughout the ages.

In conclusion, the British response stated that very careful consideration had been given to the Greek request but that "after a further detailed study of all aspects of the question ... Her Majesty's Government is of the view that the current request from the Greek Government introduces no new elements into the situation, and they therefore remain unable to accept the arguments adduced for the

return of the sculptures."

The Intergovernmental Committee and the Marbles

In December 1985, the United Kingdom withdrew from UNESCO. In practice this meant that Britain no longer maintained a permanent delegation at UNESCO and did not send representatives, nor often even observers, to UNESCO Committee meetings. As it had never become a State Party to the 1970 Convention it had no responsibilities in this regard either, and this presented a serious obstacle to the Committee's ability to pursue bilateral negotiations for the return of the marbles.[9]

Nonetheless, in 1987, the Committee encouraged its Chairman, Ambassador Luis Villoro Toranzo of Mexico, "to persevere in seeking the most appropriate means of continuing the negotiations [for the return of the marbles] and to study the different solutions that might be envisaged." In response to this recommendation, the Chairman travelled to London where he met separately with the Greek Ambassador to the United Kingdom, intellectuals who supported the return of the marbles to Athens, and representatives of the independent British Committee for the Return of the Parthenon Marbles.

From these meetings, Ambassador Villoro Toranzo concluded that the best hope for making progress in these discussions was to obtain detailed technical information about the proposed museum in Athens which was to be built to house the Parthenon Marbles, and then to obtain the opinions of internationally acknowledged experts about whether the marbles would be better situated in London or Athens. This approach was incorporated in a recommendation at the Sixth Session of the Committee held in April 1989 that invited the Chairman "to use the information provided to continue to persevere in negotiations."[10]

In May 1989, the Greek authorities announced an international architectural competition, held under the

auspices of the International Union of Architects, for the design of a museum in Athens to house the Parthenon marbles. A total of 438 studies were presented during the "ideas" phase of the competition, from which 10 were chosen to proceed to the "project" competition. In November 1990, the Jury awarded three prizes and a special mention. First prize went to the Italian team, and it was decided that the museum would be built on the Makryianni site.[11]

When the Intergovernmental Committee met, in Athens, in 1991, the plans for the Acropolis Museum had only just become available and it had not been possible, therefore, to act on the recommendation of the Sixth Session that international experts study the blueprints and mechanical drawings for the proposed museum. The Vice-President of the British Committee for the Restitution of the Parthenon Marbles, however, stated that his Committee believed that the last real argument against the return of the marbles to Greece - the "conservation argument" - had now been addressed as a state of the art museum was to be built to house the marbles upon their return.

In his view, all of the other arguments advanced in the British response to the 1984 Greek response had already been addressed by his Committee.

At its Eighth Session held in 1993, it was noted that the International Council of Museums (ICOM), on behalf of the Committee, was to arrange for an expert to examine the plans of the proposed Acropolis Museum and to give his advice about the best location for the marbles. It was also noted that the final construction plans would be completed in the summer of 1993. In anticipation of the receipt of the expert's report and the construction of a new museum, no further bilateral negotiations were pursued.

Significantly - and for the first time in a decade - representatives of both Greece and the United Kingdom attended the Ninth Session of the Committee held in 1996, which I chaired. The Greek delegation took the position

(without being specific) that the legal questions had now been settled and the only remaining question was when and how the marbles would be returned. They requested that the Committee endorse the principles of their return, one of which involved the construction of the Acropolis Museum, now scheduled for construction beginning in April 1997 with completion scheduled for the year 2000.

The British delegation responded by indicating that a paper stating the position of the British Government had been prepared and distributed in Great Britain. A copy of this paper was shared with the Committee members and observers at the meeting, and it was immediately evident that there had been no change in the position of the British Government. The British position continued to maintain that Lord Elgin had acquired the marbles legally; that they were well-housed in the British Museum where they served as an "ambassador" for Greece; and, that the British Museum was wholly independent of the Government. The paper also explored the possibility of a legislative solution whereby Parliament would pass legislation to force the British Museum to return the marbles, but concluded that this would be contrary to Article 1 of the First Protocol to the European Convention of Human Rights. Once again, the Committee's involvement was restricted to the passage of a recommendation urging the Director-General of UNESCO to continue to work to resolve the issue and to undertake further discussions with both states.

Following this meeting of the Committee and in my capacity as Chairman, I travelled to London to meet with representatives of the British Government to try once more to advance bilateral discussions between Greece and the United Kingdom. And once again, the representatives of the Government of the United Kingdom argued that deaccessioning was not permitted by the *British Museum Act*, that the British Museum was independent of the govern-

ment and that there was no public support within Britain for the return of the marbles.

While the British position had clearly become entrenched, there was one significant development between the Ninth (1996) and Tenth (1999) sessions of the Committee: following the election of the Labour Government, Britain rejoined UNESCO in July 1997. Again, both countries sent delegations to the Tenth Session (January 1999) as observers with "voice" but without vote at the meeting. This session, unfortunately, witnessed a hardening of the positions of both Greece and the United Kingdom.

The issue of the cleaning of the marbles by the British Museum in 1938, as described in William St Clair's book, *Lord Elgin and the Marbles* (3rd edition, 1997) was addressed by both delegations. The Greek delegation requested that the Intergovernmental Committee establish an international committee of experts in the preservation of marble to investigate the incident, noted that the International Council of Museums (ICOM) had passed a resolution about the marbles at its meeting in Melbourne in 1998 and stated that, in their opinion, the British Museum had the ability to return the marbles to Greece if it wished to do so.

In response, the British delegation stated that it deplored what had happened in 1938 and noted that those responsible for the cleaning had been dismissed almost immediately thereafter. They also reported that the British Museum would be holding an international conference on the conservation of marble later in 1999, and that specialists from Greece would be invited to attend. With respect to the ability of the British Museum to lend objects from its collection, they agreed that loans were possible under specified circumstances but considered that a permanent loan would be tantamount to disposal and therefore not possible. In conclusion, they advised the Committee that the policy of the British government remained unchanged: the mar-

bles should remain in the British Museum.

Despite these evident differences, both delegations agreed to cooperate to draft a recommendation for the approval of the Committee. A recommendation was drafted and duly signed by representatives of both parties, but when the text was sent to Greece for final approval, the Greek Minister of Culture, Mr. Evangelos Venizelos, found that he could not endorse it. Several attempts were made at alternate wording with the assistance of representatives of other delegations, but no agreement could be reached. The Greek and British delegations - and the Committee - then faced the prospect for the first time in almost 15 years of not being able to present a recommendation concerning the Parthenon Marbles to the General Conference of UNESCO in the fall of 1999.

During the afternoon of the final day of the meeting, the delegations of Italy and the Netherlands, supported by Canada, proposed a recommendation inviting the Director-General to contribute, through the expert consultative bodies of UNESCO, to the international scientific debate on the conservation of the Parthenon marbles and to undertake further initiatives to promote bilateral negotiations between Greece and the United Kingdom. This recommendation was unanimously supported by the Committee and clearly represented a compromise on the part of the members. The recommendation received neither the unqualified support nor the complete condemnation of the Greek and British delegations. The Committee believed, however, that encouragement of further bilateral negotiations was now more important than ever, and that the issue had to continue to be presented to the General Conference.

Conclusion

The Parthenon marbles represent the most famous - or perhaps infamous - case involving a request for the return

of the cultural property from one nation to another. The complexities of this case, both legal and ethical, encompass the complete spectrum of the dilemnas, moral issues and contradictions than will be faced by any two nations seeking to negotiate the return of cultural property.

The role of UNESCO in the bilateral negotiations involving the Parthenon marbles may seem ambiguous, and if this is your interpretation, then you share some of the frustration experienced by those involved with UNESCO who have been working to resolve this issue for the past 15 years. But it is important to remember that UNESCO has a defined role - that of mediation and the facilitation of bilateral negotiations - that does not permit it to become judgmental or to take a "position" that supports one country's claim against anothers.

It should also be remembered that UNESCO has played a crucial role in keeping this issue before the world, and that every two years at the General Conference, the 186 Member States of UNESCO must address the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Committee about the Parthenon Marbles. Without the active involvement of the Intergovernmental Committee and the General Conference, the entire question of the return of the marbles risks being reduced to, or even dismissed as, a bilateral squabble between Greece and the United Kingdom.

If you ask the question: can UNESCO resolve the issue of the return of the marbles, the answer must inevitably be "no, not by itself." UNESCO was never meant to be an organization that could impose sanctions on Member States. But UNESCO does have extraordinary influence and the power of moral suasion. Ultimately it will be these powers, and the fact that bilateral negotiations continued through the "good offices" of UNESCO, that a mutually satisfactory resolution will be found.

Notes

(The opinions expressed herein are those of the author and are not necessarily shared by the Department of Canadian Heritage, the Government of Canada or UNESCO.)

Canada was first elected to the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee in 1983 and was re-elected in 1988. Following the 1991 meeting of the Committee, Canada did not seek re-election to a third term. At the urging of the UNESCO Secretariat, Canada successfully sought re-election at the 1995 General Conference of UNESCO. Canada has been represented at all meetings of the Committee since 1983 by Mr. David A. Walden, Director, Movable Cultural Property, Department of Canadian Heritage. Mr. Walden was first elected Chairman at its Ninth Session in 1996, and he was re-elected at the Tenth Session in January 1999.

[1]The Constitution of the UNESCO solemnly declares "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed .... and peace must be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind." For further information about the founding and history of UNESCO see Michel Conil Lacoste, *The Story of a Grand Design: UNESCO, 1946-1993*, Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1994, and Fernando Valderrama, *A History of UNESCO*, Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1995.

[2]The first 20 states to ratify the Constitution were the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, Union of South Africa, Australia, India, Mexico, France, Dominican Republic, Turkey, Egypt, Norway, Canada, China, Denmark, United States of America, Czechoslovakia, Brazil, Lebanon, and Greece.

[3]Article 1 of the Constitution of UNESCO.

[4]The following statistics provide a comprehensive summary of the current composition of UNESCO: 186 Member States; 178 Member States have established National Commissions composed of representatives of their countries' educational, scientific and cultural communities; 165 Member States have established

permanent delegations at UNESCO, in Paris; 60 UNESCO field offices and units exist in different parts of the world; 588 non-governmental organizations (NGO's) maintain "official" relations with UNESCO and a further 1200 NGO's co-operate on an occasional basis.

[5]Adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO, Paris, 14 November 1970.

[6]Article 1 of the 1970 Convention.

[7]The members of the Committee in January 1999 were Algeria, Azerbaijan, Benin, Bolivia, Cameroon, Canada, Peoples Republic of China, Cuba, Ethiopia, India, Italy, Jamaica, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, Panama, Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Togo and Ukraine.

[8]Section A.6, "Particular significance for the requesting country" of the Standard form concerning requests for return or restitution, submitted by Greece, 1984.

[9]In contrast, when the United States withdrew from UNESCO in 1984 it agreed to honour its commitment to the 1970 Convention and continues to enter into bilateral agreements to implement the Convention despite not being a member of UNESCO.

[10]Recommendation #1 of the Sixth Session of the Committee, Paris, April 1989.

[11]Designs had been solicited for three sites: Makryianni, Koile and Dionysos.■

Law, Ethics and the Parthenon Marbles

John Henry Merryman

The Parthenon Marbles are monuments of human culture, an essential part of our common past. They tell us who we are and where we come from, give us cultural identity. We also enjoy them as great art. Like literature and music, they enrich our lives. The Marbles also dramatically illustrate an important fact: the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the British Museum in London, the Louvre in Paris, the Hermitage in Leningrad, and indeed all of the great Western museums, contain vast collections of works from other parts of the world. If the principle were established that works of foreign origin should be returned to their sources, the world's great museums would be drastically depleted.

Thus the preservation and enjoyment of world culture and the fate of the collections of the world's great museums are at stake in a decision about the Marbles. All of us care about the Marbles. All of us have an interest in their future. They are part of "the cultural heritage of all mankind" (the quoted phrase appears in the preamble to the 1954 Hague Convention).

The Greek case for return of the Marbles to Athens has two parts. One is that the Marbles were wrongly taken by Lord Elgin and have never belonged, legally or morally, to the British. I shall explain to you why I believe that is a losing argument. The other part of the Greek case is that, even if the British properly acquired and own the Marbles, they ought now to return them to Greece. I shall explain to you why I believe that would be a persuasive argument if

conditions in Athens were different.

The Law of the Case. In 1801, when the crucial transaction took place, all of Greece was a part of the Ottoman Empire, ruled from Constantinople, as it had been for more than three centuries. The Ottoman government was internationally recognized as the *de jure*, as well as *de facto*, government of all of the territory and peoples within the Empire. By the international law of the time, the Ottomans had absolute legal authority over the Parthenon. It is clear that they could give Elgin the right to remove the Marbles. Did they do so?

In response to Elgin's request for access to the Acropolis the Ottomans issued an official document -- a *firman* -- of which only a contemporary Italian translation survives (the original, in Turkish, was addressed to the Ottoman officials in Athens and has since been lost). The language of the *firman* is ambiguous, and it is not unreasonable to argue that in removing sculptures from the Parthenon Elgin exceeded the authority the Ottomans granted to him.

It is the law everywhere, however, that an act in excess of the authority granted can be legalized by ratification, and it appears that the Ottomans twice ratified Elgin's removals. Once, when Elgin's actions in removing sculptures from the temple were widely known and discussed, the Sultan issued additional *firmans* to the local officials in Athens, expressly approving everything they had done to accommodate Elgin. At another time, a large shipment of Marbles was detained in Piraeus because the local Ottoman officials, under pressure from the French, refused to permit their embarkation. Written orders came from Constantinople to release the shipment, and the Marbles were allowed to leave for England.

These events clearly amount to ratification. Under the international law of the time the removal was legal. It is

true Ottoman officials in Constantinople and Athens were bribed by Elgin to permit and condone the removal. Whatever their motivation may have been, however, they had the legal authority to act as they did. At a time and in a culture in which officials routinely had to be bribed to perform their legal duties (as is still true today in much of the world), the fact that bribes occurred is not a significant consideration, particularly in view of the subsequent ratification of Elgin's actions by the Sultan.

The Morality of the Case. It occasionally happens that what is legal seems morally wrong. I have argued that the removal of the Marbles was legal, but was it moral? There are two sharply contrasting historical images of Lord Elgin. One, widely popularized by Byron, depicts him as an unfeeling despoiler of a helpless Greece. Byron's attack on Elgin took its most influential form in two poems: *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and *The Curse of Minerva*. The former, in particular, captured the public imagination; it was an immediate best seller in several languages and has become a monument of poetic Romanticism. Many who firmly believe that the Marbles should be returned to Greece base their positions on the Byronic version of events and motivations.

History, however, provides a more complex and interesting picture. The Ottomans clearly were prepared to dispose of the marbles as counters in their relations with the major European powers. The French, rivals of the British for influence in Turkey, actively sought to acquire the Marbles for the Louvre. If Elgin had not removed the Marbles, the French (or the Bavarians, who also actively sought to acquire them) would certainly have done so.

Thus the question was not whether the marbles would be taken, but by whom. That may not be a powerful moral argument, but it accurately describes the morality prevailing in that time and place, which is the morality applicable

to a judgment about Elgin's actions. If removal of the Marbles was bound to occur, does moral blame attach to one who did the inevitable?

It is remotely possible that the Marbles would not have been taken by the French or the Bavarians if they had been left in place by Elgin, but that would have left them exposed to a variety of serious hazards. The Ottomans were insensitive to the beauty and the artistic and cultural importance of the Greek works on the Acropolis. The Propylaea had been shattered when explosives stored in it by the Ottomans were struck by lightning. They had then moved their powder magazine to the Parthenon, and it exploded when struck by a Venetian cannonball. The Ottomans had deliberately razed the little temple of Athena Nike to make way for an artillery post. Most Turks, including those of the military establishment who were quartered on the Acropolis, had only contempt for the works of the Greeks. At least one of them boasted that he had used marble from statues found on the spot to make mortar for his home.

There is no reason to suppose that Greek antiquities would have received better care from the Ottomans during the remaining years of Turkish dominance than in the previous centuries. As the cause of Greek Independence gathered force, the temptation for the Turks to damage Greek monuments and the possibility that they would be unintentional victims of military action greatly increased. The growing trade in antiquities, fed by Greeks as well as by Turks, would have led to the dispersion of more works in individual collections of uncertain fate (many works disappeared in this way, taken by travelers to Europe and eventually lost or discarded or made anonymous by the loss of context).

As to the sculptures that were left on the Parthenon, we know what has happened to them. Those that were not removed by Elgin's workmen have been seriously damaged

by exposure to the corrosive atmosphere of modern Athens and have had to be removed from the temple and taken indoors in order to preserve them from further deterioration. Those taken to England and installed in the British Museum have been better preserved, even after accounting for the damage done in the unfortunate "cleaning"episode so well described by William St. Clair.

Any estimate of the morality of Elgin's actions has to take into account both his motives and the results of what he did. His motives, though they were certainly mixed, included a large element of reverence for the Marbles and the intention to remove them to a safer place. He also wished to bring the best of classical Greek art to the attention of the world. Elgin was convinced of the superiority of Greek over Roman art, and the world was eventually brought to that view through the attention focused on the Marbles by Elgin's actions.

The Marbles ruined Elgin. He went deeply into debt at high interest to finance the project. In addition to the expense of maintaining his party and financing their work in Athens and providing a steady flow of gifts to Ottoman officials, Elgin employed 300 to 400 laborers at a time. The 35,000 British pounds that he was eventually paid by Parliament was far less than the Marbles cost him, and the entire sum was taken by his creditors. Elgin left England a pauper and died in poverty in France on November 4, 1841. His enormous debts were not fully paid off by his family until 1875.

Indeed, it is possible to make of Elgin a nobly tragic figure, a man so dedicated to the cause of classical Greek art and to the acquisition and preservation of the Marbles that he sacrificed his career and fortune for them. That picture is an exaggerated one, just as Byron's was. If we try to eliminate the exaggerations, what remains is a morally complex picture. It would not be at all unreasonable to come down on Elgin's side as rescuer of the Marbles. One who at great

personal cost is responsible for the preservation of a great cultural treasure has performed a great moral act.

Conversely, one who damages a great cultural treasure deserves moral censure, and it is undeniable that Elgin's removals caused serious damage to the structure of the Parthenon. (The chief of Elgin's party in Athens, the Italian artist Giovanni Battista Lusieri, reported that "I have had to be a little barbarous.") We must somehow deal with the fact that Elgin did both good and evil. How does one balance his merit in preserving the Marbles against his responsibility for damage to the Parthenon? The problem is complicated, as we have seen, by uncertainty about what would have happened to the Marbles (and to the Parthenon) had Elgin not taken them; by the apparent unselfishness of Elgin's motivation and his conviction of the superiority of classical Greek sculpture; and by the impact of the episode on the history of art and of taste. It seems significant that Elgin impoverished, rather than enriched, himself in acquiring the Marbles. Finally, recall that the applicable moral considerations are those of that time and place. It would be unreasonable to suggest that Elgin was entirely blameless in taking the Marbles and damaging the Parthenon, but it would be equally unreasonable, in view of all of the facts, to conclude that the removal was morally wrong. In fact, there is no persuasively incisive answer to the moral question. The opposing considerations are too much in balance.

I conclude that the legality of the removal of the Marbles is clearly established and that its immorality has not been demonstrated. The Greeks do not have a strong legal or moral case against Elgin. The British own the Marbles and, on balance, rightly acquired ownership. For those who agree, that settles the legal and moral questions about the removal.

Return nonetheless? There remains the most interest-

ing question of all. When she was Greece's Minister of Culture, Melina Mercouri said it this way: "The British tell us they saved the Marbles. Thank you very much. Now give them back." Should they go back?

We begin with the general principle of repose — the reasonable proposition that an existing situation should persist unless there is some reason to change it. Such a principle is consistent with the common human tendency to rely on appearances and to assume that the present state of affairs will continue. Observe that repose is a neutral principle. Most often it justifies the retention of cultural property by nations of origin. For example, it seems right that Mayan artifacts remain in Mexico and Guatemala unless there is some good reason to remove them. In the present case the principle works the other way. Britain has the Marbles, and it is up to those who wish the Marbles returned to Greece to justify their proposal.

Cultural Nationalism. The most obvious argument for return of the Marbles is that they belong in Greece because they are Greek. They were created in Greece by Greek artists for civic and religious purposes of the Athens of that time. The appealing implication is that, being in this sense Greek, they belong among Greeks. This is what I refer to as the "cultural nationalist" premise. It has two kinds of appeal: Romantic and rational.

Public attitudes in the international campaign for restitution of cultural property often are based on unthinking acceptance of the cultural nationalist premise, whose continuing power is a measure of the control that Byron still exerts over our attitudes toward cultural objects. In the case of the Elgin Marbles, the argument from cultural nationalism is more an assertion than a reason. If we look behind Byron's romanticism, it is not self-evident that something made in a place belongs there, or that something produced by artists of an earlier time ought to be

returned to the territory occupied by their cultural descendants, or that the present government of a nation should have power over artifacts historically associated with its people or territory.

The rational basis of cultural nationalism recognizes the relation between cultural property and cultural definition. For a full life and a secure identity people need exposure to their history, much of which is represented or illustrated by objects. Such artifacts are important to cultural definition and expression, to shared identity and community. In helping to preserve the identity of specific cultures they help the world preserve texture and diversity. They nourish artists and generate art (it is a truism among art historians that art comes from art). Cultural property stimulates learning and scholarship. A people deprived of its artifacts is culturally impoverished.

There are two difficulties in relating the notion of cultural deprivation to the physical location of Marbles. The first is that Greece is hardly bereft of ancient sculpture. As any visitor to Greek sites, museums and storehouses soon realizes, Greece has an abundance of ancient sculptures. The Greek people are not culturally impoverished. Second, if the British had attempted to appropriate the identity of the Marbles, disguising or misrepresenting their origin, then the Greeks, and all the rest of us, would rightly object. But the British have always presented the Marbles openly and candidly as the work of Greek artists of extraordinary genius and refinement. Presented as they are, spectacularly mounted in their own fine rooms in one of the world's greatest museums, the Marbles honor Greece and bring admiration and respect for the Greek achievement. No visitor to the British Museum could come away with any other impression.

The cultural nationalist argument sometimes incorporates two others, one economic and one political. Economically, whoever has the Marbles has something of

value: they would bring an enormous price if offered for sale, and their presence in a public collection nourishes the tourist industry. Possession is obviously necessary in order to enjoy this economic value, but that merely re-argues the question of legal title, and we have seen that the law supports the British side of the legal argument.

Politically based cultural nationalism treats the presence of the Marbles in England, or in any other place than Greece, as an offense to Greeks and the Greek nation. Here the demand for the return of the Marbles is based on an assertion of national pride and honor. No candid observer can deny the power of this kind of political nationalism in world affairs. But with it come large elements of superstition and prejudice, an unsavory record as the religion of the state and a source of international economic, social, political and armed conflict. Nationalism of that kind has blood on its hands, and its assertion does not argue clearly, or perhaps at all, for the return of the Marbles to Greece.

Even if cultural nationalism were to apply, it would not establish that the Marbles should return to Athens. They have been in England since 1812 and in that time have become a part of the British cultural heritage. The Elgin Marbles and other works in the British Museum have entered British culture. They help define the British to themselves, inspire British arts, give Britons identity and community, civilize and enrich British life, stimulate British scholarship. While one may argue that in these terms the Greek claim is more (or less) powerful than that of the British, it is not unreasonable to perceive the two positions as roughly equivalent.

I conclude that the argument from cultural nationalism fails to make the case for the return of the Marbles. It fails because it expresses values not clearly entitled to respect (political nationalism), because it is founded on romance and sentiment rather than reason, and because it is a two

edged argument that is equally available to the British. One can admire the Greekness of the Marbles and respect their specific cultural importance to Greeks without concluding that they belong in Greece.

Cultural Internationalism. A variety of international instruments affirm that "cultural property belonging to any people whatsoever" is "the cultural heritage of all mankind." These words from the preamble to the 1954 Hague Convention announce the principle of "cultural internationalism:" as stated in the first paragraph of this article, everyone has an interest in the preservation and enjoyment of cultural property, wherever it is situated, from whatever cultural or geographic source. The Marbles are a prominent part of "the cultural heritage of all mankind."

We can apply cultural internationalism to the case of the Elgin Marbles in this way: if the legal and moral arguments are treated as evenly balanced, and if the argument from nationalism is also inconclusive, are there considerations flowing from the principle of cultural internationalism that indicate the proper way to allocate the Marbles? I believe that there are three such considerations, which we can call preservation, integrity and distribution.

Preservation takes priority for obvious reasons. If the Marbles are destroyed, people of all cultures will be deprived of a part of their cultural heritage, and considerations of integrity and distribution are preempted. Damage short of destruction, whether through inadequate care, the action of the elements or the hazards of war, terrorism or vandalism, threatens the same value.

In the British Museum, the Marbles are well mounted, maintained (pace the damage incurred in the infamous "cleaning"episode described by William St. Clair in his article) and guarded. The sculptures remaining on the Parthenon have been badly eroded by exposure to a variety of hazards, including the smog of Athens, which continues

to consume the temple. If one had to make a decision based solely on concern for the physical preservation of the Marbles, it would be difficult to justify moving them to Athens. Even if they would be placed in a museum there, as the Greeks plan, rather than reinstalled on the Parthenon, what reason would there be to expect that they would be safer in Athens over the next 175 years than they have been in London over the past 175 years? Under present conditions, the preservation interest does not argue for removing the Marbles from the British Museum.

The second international concern is for the integrity of the work of art. If we think of the intact Parthenon as an integrated work of art, so that the parts together have more beauty and significance than the sum of the dismembered pieces, then it makes sense to argue that the sculptures should be reinstalled on the temple. (That object could of course be achieved by removing the Parthenon to London and there reuniting it with the sculptures, but no one would seriously advance such a proposal. Who can imagine the Acropolis without the temple?) Accordingly, the integrity argument favors the Greek position.

There is, however, the difficulty that the Marbles cannot be reinstalled on the Parthenon without exposing them to certain destruction from the combined effects of the elements and the smog of Athens. The preservation and integrity interests are in direct conflict, and in that case preservation should prevail. At a time when the remaining sculptures on the Parthenon have had to be taken indoors by the Greek authorities to preserve them from further erosion, it cannot seriously be argued that the Marbles should be restored to their places on the temple. In fact, the Greek proposal is to transfer them from a museum in London to a museum in Athens. There they would be nearer the Parthenon, but that remaining distance is critical. The argument for return is an argument for restoration of the integrity of the Parthenon, and that is not presently

possible without exposing the Marbles to unacceptable hazards.

The other international interest is in an appropriate international distribution of the common cultural heritage, so that all peoples have a reasonable opportunity for access to their own cultural achievements and those of others. How should this distribution/access consideration affect the allocation of the Marbles? It is true that Greek antiquities can be found in major museums and private collections throughout the world and that some of the greatest Greek antiquities are abroad. But it is difficult to argue that Greece itself is in this sense impoverished. Greek museum and private collections are enormously rich in Greek antiquities of all periods. One of the reasons people go to Greece is to enjoy its wealth of cultural treasures.

The distribution argument actually cuts another way, in favor of the dispersion, rather than retention in one place, of the works of a culture. The late American art critic John Canaday argued that American art should be "spread around," not kept at home. The idea of "missionary art" that makes a culture vivid and comprehensible abroad is an appealing one that would promote international understanding and mutual cultural respect. The point is summed up in the preamble to the 1970 UNESCO Convention:

"[T]he interchange of cultural property among nations for scientific, cultural and educational purposes increases the knowledge of the civilization of Man, enriches the cultural life of all peoples and inspires mutual respect and appreciation among nations."

If all the works of the great artists of classical Athens were returned and kept there, the rest of the world would be culturally impoverished.

Criteria for an appropriate international distribution of the artifacts of a culture do not yet exist; the dialogue until now has been dominated by demands for repatriation and by deference to cultural nationalism. But on the facts it

seems difficult to argue convincingly on distributional grounds for the return of the Marbles to Athens. If we focus instead on the question of access, there seems little reason to suppose the Marbles would be more accessible to the world's peoples in Athens than they are in London.

Reviewing the cultural internationalist arguments, it appears that the values of cultural internationalism lead in different directions. The most powerful of them, preservation, does not advance the Greek cause, since there is no apparent basis for arguing that the Marbles would be safer in Athens. The integrity argument favors reuniting the Marbles with the Parthenon, but at present that is not possible without exposing them to unacceptable hazards. There are no developed criteria for applying the distribution/access concern, but it does not appear that the present distribution of Greek antiquities argues for returning the Marbles to Athens.

Accordingly, under present circumstances, the proposal that the British should return the Marbles to Athens is unconvincing. The British legally acquired them. The acquisition was not clearly immoral. Applying the preservation, integrity and distribution considerations appears to lead to the conclusion that there is no good reason to move the Marbles from the British Museum to Athens. Under the principal of repose it is appropriate for them to remain in London.

Conclusion. Throughout this paper I have addressed the Greek claim that, as a matter of right, the Marbles should be returned to Athens, and I have concluded that the existence of such a right has not been established. There is, however, an entirely different way to approach the matter. The Greeks could recognize that the Marbles have great value to the British and could bargain with them about return.

Recall for a moment the argument from cultural

nationalism: that the Marbles belong in Greece because they are Greek. One interpretation of that argument is that possession of the Marbles has higher value to Greeks than to non-Greeks, and the negative implication is that possessing the Marbles has less value to the British. One way to test that proposition is for the Greeks to make an offer that the British should not refuse. The offer obviously need not be in money terms; nations have a variety of political, social and cultural interests and a wide diversity of deployable resources.

So let us assume for discussion purposes that the Greeks are prepared to negotiate (i.e. bargain) about the future situs of the Marbles. If they truly are more valuable to the Greeks than to the British, then the result that should emerge from the bargain is a win-win: in return for something that is more valuable to the British and less valuable to the Greeks than possession of the Marbles, they would return to Athens.■

The Athenian Century

in memoriam Stylianos Triantis

Stephen G. Miller

I thank the Society for the Preservation of the Greek Heritage for inviting me to participate in the conference on the Parthenon Marbles. I hope to justify the invitation by convincing you that Americans should become engaged in the efforts to return the Parthenon Marbles to Greece. It will be clear from the beginning that I speak of the Parthenon Marbles, and not of the Elgin Marbles. This distinction is popular in Greece today, for it separates the man from the marbles. But it is significant for another reason. By speaking of the Parthenon Marbles, we exclude from the discussion the hundreds of artifacts that Elgin took from Greece to England that are not a part of this monument [Fig. 1]. It is to this monument, the Parthenon, and only this monument, that I speak. It also should be understood from the outset that I speak an American, for it may not be apparent at first glance why Americans should be concerned with this monument. Even if Americans can use it as a backdrop for their souvenir photographs, as have millions of visitors from every corner of the world, what justification can there be for an American, or anyone other than a Greek or a Britisher, to become involved with the repatriation of the Parthenon Marbles?

Let us look at the question from another perspective. As we approach the end of a century (and of a millennium) it is natural that we look back at the accomplishments of this most recent period. It is equally appropriate to think about the place that this century will take in the history of civilization. The "American Century," as the 20th century has been called with some justification, certainly will be

regarded as one of great technological advances, from the automobile to the airplane to the television to men on the Moon to the computer and the internet. What will survive two thousand years from now to remind the world of this "American Century?" Certainly the Statue of Liberty might be that icon, even if it was created in the previous century by France. But the notion of liberty is so strongly tied to our country that I suspect that this lady may be our enduring symbol. So, too, the 19th century can be called the British Century, and the Houses of Parliament stands for the parliamentarian tradition, the rule of law that echoes the Magna Carta, arguably the single most important gift of the British Empire to the world. But what about the Parthenon? Surely it is symbolic of the gifts of 5th-century Athens to our civilization. I would like to explore those gifts with you, but first let us understand what we are talking about when we speak of the Athenian Century.

The 5th century B.C. began, for Athens, on a positive note. The newly established democracy was taking hold, and the Greeks of Asia Minor had risen in revolt against the Great King and the Persian Empire. The Athenians could scarcely resist the chance to aid the Ionians, who were not only fellow Greeks but democrats in the bargain. But the revolt was crushed by Persian might, and attention was turned toward those Athenian upstarts who had helped the revolt. A Persian expeditionary force was sent out and landed at Marathon. But to the surprise of all concerned (including the Athenians, I suspect) the Persians were routed at Marathon in 490 B.C. by the local troops under the leadership of Miltiades. A mound that projects from the middle of the plain commemorates that victory, and Marathon reverberates in our own day in many ways, including the race that, regardless of where it is run or for what length, keeps the name of Marathon alive. A Persian helmet, according to the inscription on it, was dedicated by

the Athenians to Zeus at Olympia. It was a part of the booty that the Athenians took home from the battlefield that day at Marathon, booty that included a new self-confidence as well as money. Both were in evidence when the Athenians began to build a large new Temple on the Akropolis dedicated to their patron goddess.

The construction of a temple and of a political psyche was aided by an unforeseen event. At Laurion on the east coast of Attica a huge new strike of silver was made in 483 B.C. Some wanted to distribute it among the citizens, but Themistokles persuaded the Athenians to put the windfall into the navy. This armed fleet was to be the basis of Athenian success and power for nearly all of the remainder of the 5th century, even as it provided a strong base for democracy.

The Persians were not about to forgive and forget the defeat dealt them by the Athenians at Marathon. Ten years later, in 480 B.C., they mounted a huge invasion of Greece by land and by sea from the north. Their forces numbered in the hundreds of thousands, many more than the Athenians could put up. But the Athenians were not alone now. Who can forget the Spartans' valiant failure to hold Thermopylai? After Thermopylai fell, the allied Greeks felt their only hope was to defend the Peloponnesos at the Isthmos of Corinth. And so Athens, north of the Isthmos, was abandoned, and the partially built new Temple of Athena Parthenos was only one of many, many Athenian buildings that the vengeful Persians put to the torch in 480 B.C. We need here only remind ourselves of the subsequent stunning naval victory of the allied forces, led by the Athenian fleet, over the vastly superior (at least numerically) Persian fleet at Salamis, and the final victory at Plateia. But we must also remember that, before the Battle of Plateia, the Greeks took an oath that they would not rebuild the destroyed sacred structures; but would leave the charred ruins as mute testimony to the sacrilege of the

Persians. Those ruins included the incomplete Old Parthenon.

We, today, may wonder at the luck that eradicated so many earlier buildings and left the slate clean for a new and splendid construction program. But in 479 B.C., the Athenians must have returned home and wondered at the price of their victory over the Persians. The ruins of their homes and of their city were everywhere. Confidence in their own abilities and their innate superiority over the barbarians must have been a necessary psychological prop to their weary bodies covered with the ashes of their homes and the rubble of their hopes. Life did press forward. During the next 30 years, the Athenians would create a new commercial and civic center, a new Agora, at the northwestern foot of the Akropolis. Here the cries of peddlers and politicians would intermingle as debates over priorities and the price of anchovies would go on side-by-side. And here the new democracy would take flight.

While this was going on, another new contribution to our culture was being nurtured and developed. I refer to the theater. Aischylos, son of Euphorion, of Athens, was the first and best known, but by no means the only tragic poet of the period. He had fought at Marathon, and at Salamis. Now, after the Persian Wars, his most famous works were produced. The biggest competition for Aischylos after the Persian Wars was coming from a man 30 years his junior: Sophokles, son of Sophilos, of Athens. It is worth remembering that Sophokles, like Aischylos, served his country on several occasions, including twice as general. His first generalship was served in 440 B.C. with Perikles as his colleague. Sophokles' last play was produced in 409 B.C. when he was over 80. His life covered nearly the whole of the 5th century B.C. Euripides, son of Mnesarchos, of Athens, who was born in 485 B.C., about 10 years after Sophokles, seems to have died in 406 B.C., within a few months of Sophokles. By the end of the 5th

century B.C. these three men, and many others of lesser fame, had created a tradition of theater and of literature that endures today. It never fails to encourage my hopes for our future when I hear sophomores debating the justice of Kreon's position, or of Electra's revenge, or of Agamemnon's choice, and it never fails to make me want to join in the debate. We should not forget Aristophanes, son of Philippos, of Athens, 20 years the junior of Euripides, whose biting satire put Athenian comedy at the same high level as tragedy. Can we imagine our theater today without the inventions of these Athenians?

So, too, in sculpture and painting, the Athenians moved to new heights. Let us remember that no one had ever been able to reproduce the human form with total realism, but that by 600 B.C. the Greek sculptor was embarking on a new journey toward that end. We see it most clearly in the kouros, the nude male youth, where early efforts with stiff and chunky forms revealed as much about their Egyptian prototypes and the marble block from which they were carved as they did about the actual appearance of the individual they attempted to portray. By the end of the Persian Wars Athens was making a claim for being the first among equals in developments where the marble denies its own nature even as it is transformed into fleshy human curves, and the ability to suggest potential movement, in the shifting weight on alternate legs with corresponding position of hips and curve of body, all emphasized by the tilt of head. By the end of the 5th century, even the sculptor of tomb stones has achieved such a level of accomplishment, that an otherwise unknown Athenian lady, Hegeso, lives for us, not just as a woman portrayed with great skill, but with the suggestion of emotion. Can we look at her and not share her demise? Not be aware of our share of the ethereal, ephemeral experience that we call life? Pheidias: does the name resound? It did in the 5th century B.C., a larger than life sculptor who cre-

ated the gold-and-ivory statue of Zeus for the temple at Olympia, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

We must, two and a half millennia later, still marvel at the good fortune (built upon generations of experience and development) that brought the artistic skill of a Pheideias into the crackling creative atmosphere of a Sophokles and a Euripides and all those who were active parts of their Athenian community. We must marvel even more that this happened in a time of communal self-conscious self-confidence, born in the ironic ashes of a victorious and wealthy Athens. The crowning marvel of all these coincidences is Perikles, son of Xanthippos, of Athens, who was probably born in the same year as Sophokles. We must remember, as we assess the accomplishments of Perikles, that the Athenian democracy had no place for a long-term "president" or "prime-minister", and that Perikles exercised his control over the democracy by the most supreme of democratic skills: the ability to convince the Athenians that a given policy was in their best interest. And we should understand that even if Perikles were the acknowledged leader, and frequently elected to the annual 10-member board of generals, his policies could be rejected at any time. It is also fair to remember that Perikles' policies relied, at least in part, on the expansionary economics of aggressive imperialism. In this he and his Athenian compatriots share an attribute common to every nation that has given its name to a century, including the American. If Perikles would today be called an aristocratic populist in the tradition of Roosevelt or Kennedy, he would also be recognized as sharing with them an ability to motivate average citizens beyond themselves and toward goals they understood only because he had defined them. The public career of Perikles certainly began in his early thirties. By the middle of the century he had become the most prominent leader of his day, and for the next (and last) 20 years of his life was to be THE leader of Athens. In 449 or 448

B.C., two telling events happened. First, Athens concluded a formal peace with Persia; this clearly freed economic and psychological restraints. Second, Athens, on the motion of Perikles, invited the rest of the Greeks to a panhellenic conference to discuss, among other things, the restoration of the temples that had been destroyed by the Persians. The Congress was not held, but Athens and Perikles went ahead with the restoration of those temples in a building program which has never been equalled. In the countryside of Attika, temples such as that of Poseidon at Sounion and of Nemesis at Rhamous, were constructed, probably by the same architect who was responsible for the extremely well preserved Temple of Hephaistos overlooking the Classical Agora of Athens. That little building, by comparison with some of the other projects, really stands as the classic example of the Doric Temple. But it was overshadowed, and still is today, by the work of Perikles on the Akropolis.

We should remember that two prominent monuments on the Akropolis, the Erechtheion and the little temple of Athena Nike, were built in the 5th century, but after Perikles' death and we cannot know if they were a part of his vision of a statement of Athens' accomplishments. But two other buildings clearly were in his program, the Propylaia and the Parthenon. The Propylaia, not quite finished at the time of Perikles' death in 429 B.C., replaced a building at the entrance to the Akropolis that had been burnt by the Persians. We would not call it a temple, but as the guardian to the sanctuary of the Akropolis it certainly falls under the general rubric of sacred, and it is clear that it was intended to be a grand entrance into the holy area that lay beyond.

The Parthenon was the first element in, and still is the crowning achievement of, Perikles' building program. We could spend hours on the building; we must at least mention some of the architectural details and refinements that

have made it recognized for centuries as perhaps the best expression of man's ability to set solid geometric forms into space. Begun in 447 B.C., almost immediately after Perikles' failed attempt to assemble the panhellenic conference on temple reconstruction, it was formally dedicated at the panathenaic festival (that great expression of the civic identity of Athens) in 438 B.C. less than a decade later, although it was not until 432 B.C. that the final sculptural ornamentation was finished. The speed with which the temple was built astonishes us today, and it astonished ancient commentators as well, for the whole of Athens seems to have been mobilized in the effort.

Thus, Plutarch says: "Perikles boldly suggested to the people projects for large buildings, and plans for works that would call into play many different skills and involve long periods of time so that the stay-at-homes, no less than the sailors and soldiers, would receive a share of the public wealth...the artisans who would be needed were carpenters, moulders, bronze-smiths, stone-cutters, dyers, workers in gold and ivory, painters, embroiderers, embossers, to say nothing of those who would furnish the materials and those who would transport them such as sailors and pilots on the seas, and wagon-makers, and trainers of yoked beasts, and drivers on land. There would also be rope-makers, weavers, leather-workers, road-builders, and miners . . . and so it came to pass that the city's wealth was distributed to every type of worker of almost every age.

"And the buildings began to rise, towering in their grandeur and still inimitable in the grace of their form, since the workmen eagerly strove to surpass themselves in the beauty of their handicraft. And yet the most wonderful thing about them was the speed with which they rose. Each building, men thought, would require many generations to complete, but all of them were completed in the heyday of a single leader . . . But for this reason the works of Perikles are all the more to be wondered at: they were

erected in a short time for all time. Each one of them, in its beauty, was even then immediately antique; but each is, in the freshness of its vigor, still recent and newly made. Such is the bloom of perpetual newness, as it were, upon these works of his, which makes them ever to look untouched by time, as though the unfaltering breath of an ageless spirit had been infused into them." This was Plutarch's reaction to the Parthenon and its mates 550 years after their construction. "Untouched by time" indeed, for if the ravages of man were removed from these remains they would still retain their "bloom of perpetual newness." In a way, in their ability to move us, they retain their newness still.

It was as if pressure had built during those 30 years when the incomplete Temple of Athena had lain in ruins, and that pressure could be relieved only by constructing a new temple as quickly as possible. Pheidias was put in charge of the total building with direct responsibility for the sculptural ornamentation, and two architects who were involved in several other projects, Kallikrates and Iktinos, were to carry out the actual construction. And the whole of Athenian energy was unleashed on the project.

Why does the Parthenon appear so perfect? The gleaming marble certainly plays a role, but that is misleading for at least the upper elements of the building were painted with red and green and blue pigment. More important, to my mind, than the material are the subtle architectural refinements which were used to perfection in the Parthenon. These include corner contraction, the decrease in the space between the corner column and its neighbor so that it is not isolated in space. Our eye tends to correct for perspective so that strictly parallel lines appear to splay out at the top. But in the Parthenon this illusion is corrected by inclination, the inward tilt of the columns, that tends to bind the building together in a mass of even greater stability,at least in our eye, than Pheidias might have thought

possible. Again, we are aware of that subtle inward tilt of the columns only upon close inspection. The same is true of the entasis, the gentle swelling of the diameter of the column shaft about a third of the way up its height. Finally, the Parthenon has what we moderns call horizontal curvature. Our brains know that if we stretch a string or a rope over a long distance there will be a sag, called the catenary. Hence, if we execute a perfectly straight line, our eyes, acting for our brains, will see a sag. But the ancient Greeks, understanding that optical illusion, created their own by making the long horizontals in the Parthenon curve upward. Our eye, looking at that curve, creates an intellectual straight line. We see this upward curve in the steps when we look carefully, but it also exists in the superstructure of the building. Thus, it can be truly said that this geometric form of posts and lintels has no straight lines. It is our eyes and our brain that create the straight lines, while the actual curves create a spring, a plasticity, that breathes life into the marble.

Architectural refinements were not the only part of the Parthenon that was admired. Pheidias created a cult statue to stand within the temple, a statue of Athena made of gold and ivory that was the icon of Athens. That statue has long disappeared, but written descriptions of it and ancient reproductions allow for modern reconstructions of the goddess with the shield by her side holding the figure of Nike, Victory, on her outstretched right arm. Flesh was portrayed in ivory, the remainder of the statue in gold. Two points should be made here: the Nike was 6 feet tall which means that Athena herself was more than 40 feet tall. Secondly, the gold on the statue could be removed, weighed to be sure that nothing was missing, and replaced. The cult statue was, however, an independent free-standing statue protected by the building. It was the sculptural adornment of the building itself that excited the greed of another, much more recent generation. Let us begin our

consideration of the "Parthenon Marbles" with a clear statement of what it is that we are talking about. These sculptures were in three basic units. The most prominent of these units was that of the pediments, the triangular gable ends of the building where it was usual to portray myths relevant to the cult. A reconstruction of the central part of the eastern pediment, above the front door of the temple, is based upon written descriptions from antiquity [Fig. 2]. (it is not correct in its details, but the outlines must be right). The myth portrayed here showed the birth of the goddess Athena. Zeus, it was said, was suffering from a severe headache and finally resorted to an extreme solution. He called Hephaistos, the blacksmith god, to whack the pain with an ax. From the splitting headache jumped the goddess, full-grown, in battle gear, and shouting a battle cry. The leading players in the story are clear: Zeus on his throne, Athena, Hephaistos with his axe, Hera watching her philandering husband whose behavior, at least this time, is unimpeachable. The choice of this story for the prime position on the building was obviously appropriate to Athena, but it also has an allegorical content, for Athena was closely identified with the Democracy, and the birth of the goddess was as awesome to the Athenians as was the miraculous birth of their form of government. The central figures of this composition had disappeared already before 1674, when the first detailed drawings were made of the sculpture of the building. The cause of the disappearance is unknown, but the figures in the triangular corners did survive. They represent the gods and goddesses of Olympos who watch the virgin birth. In my opinion, the figures that had survived in the eastern pediment until Elgin's arrival form the most important part of the sculpture now in the British Museum. They have been much discussed and the skill of the carving is clear. Their identification has also been debated. These are frequently identified with Kore and her mother Demeter, and (probably) Iris, the rainbow

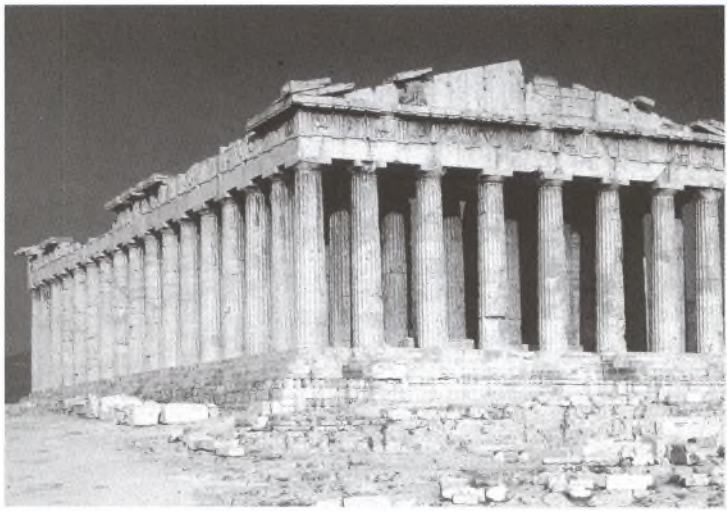


Fig 1: *The Parthenon, from the northwest.*

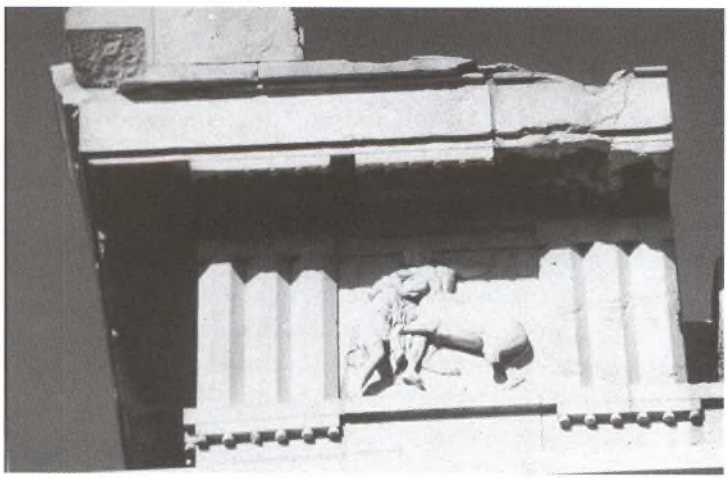


Fig 2: *Hypothetical reconstruction (based on the description of Pausanias) of the central part of the eastern pediment of the Parthenon, depicting the birth of Athena.*

and messenger goddess; they were taken from the Parthenon by Elgin together with almost every other piece of sculpture that was still on the eastern pediment in his day.

On the west pediment was portrayed the competition between Athena and Poseidon for primary position in Athens [Fig. 3], with the presentation of gifts: the olive tree from Athena and the sea-well from Poseidon. Athena's gift was judged the more valuable, although sea power was to be important to the Athenians, and thus we speak of Athens and not of "Poseidonia." There are drawings made of the western pediment in 1674 when it was still in very good condition. It was the explosion of the Turkish ammunition dump in 1687 during the seige of Athens by the Venetian Morosini that did the greatest damage to this pediment although Morosini subsequently added to the damage by attempting to remove some figures. Hence, relatively few pieces from the western pediment are in the British Museum. They were no longer on the building in relatively complete form. An exception is statue A, a personification of the Ilissos River which defines the place where the contest between Athena and Poseidon occurs: the center of the city that would be Athens. But the protagonist Athena has her torso in London and her head and shoulder in Athens.

The second group of sculptures consisted of a typical triglyph-metope frieze that ran around the exterior of the building. On the Parthenon every one of the metopes was decorated. They totalled 92; 32 on each of the long sides, and 14 on each of the short ends of the building. On the northern side, the subject of the metopes was the Trojan War, but only 13 of these metopes have survived. The state of preservation of these is not good, apparently because of the deliberate defacing by the Early Christians when the temple was converted to a church in the 5th century after Christ. None of the defaced metopes of the

northern side is in the British Museum. The frequently portrayed battle of the Gods and the Giants for control of Mt. Olympos was shown on the 14 metopes of the eastern side. All of these metopes were defaced in the Early Christian period, and it is difficult to be sure of the details of each. Needless to say, all 14 metopes of the eastern side have remained where Pheidias put them. The subject of the western metopes was the battle of the Greeks and the Amazons, although again the deliberate defacing of the reliefs makes detailed identification difficult. No metopes from this west side are in the British Museum.

The metopes of the south side of the Parthenon, for reasons we do not understand, escaped the mutilation of the other three sides. They portray the battle of the Lapiths and the Centaurs. This was the story of a wedding party to which the human tribe called Lapiths invited their half-horse neighbors, the centaurs. The guests became drunk and tried to make off with the Lapith women. This beastly behavior was resisted by the Lapiths. This is, once again, a Greek myth which was portrayed elsewhere many times (perhaps most significantly on the western pediment of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia, for it has a panhellenic message of the conflict between the culture of Greeks and the barbarism of all others). Theseus, the Athenian hero, was another guest at the wedding banquet, and he played an important role in aiding the Lapiths in their eventual victory. That is, the battle against barbarism can be won only with Athenian aid. One typical example shows a Centaur about to crash a wine amphora on the Lapith. The metope is in London, but both heads are in Copenhagen. In another example the Centaur rears back in the face of a Lapith onslaught. The metope is in London, the head of the Lapith is in Paris, the head of the Centaur is in Athens.

In 1755, 17 metopes were then still on the south side of the Parthenon, 10 toward the west, 7 toward the east [Fig. 4].

Fig 3: *Hypothetical reconstruction (based in part on the description of Pausanias and in part on the 1674 drawing by Jacques Carrey) of the western pediment of the Parthenon, showing the contest between Athena and Poseidon.*

Fig 4: *The southern side of the Parthenon in 1755, from the southeast (from J.D. Leroy, les ruines des plus beaux monuments de la Grece [2nd ed., Paris 1770)].*

The 15 metopes of the central area had been blown out in the explosion of 1687. But the fragments of those central metopes, sometimes in desperately small pieces, are still in Athens and are being pieced together, gradually and painstakingly. The 10th metope from the West is now in Paris. It had been acquired by the French consul in Athens, Louis Fauvel, who had it for many years in his Athenian home before it left for the Louvre. Fauvel was acknowledged by Elgin as the person who "opened up the path, along which happier circumstances allowed me to continue." That continuation resulted in 15 of the remaining 16 southern metopes being removed from the structure. The 17th is still in place, protected by a projecting cornice too massive to be moved by the British Ambassador [Fig 5].

The third group of sculpture consisted of a continuous frieze that ran over the opisthodomos and along the top of the cella walls and over the pronaos. The frieze consisted of 111 marble blocks of different sizes that produced a total length of 160 m. Of those 111 blocks, 6 were removed to create windows for the Early Christian church, the roof of which covered only the core of the Parthenon. Of the remaining 105 blocks, 49 are in the British Museum, one is in the Louvre, and the rest (many in fragments that are being pieced together) are in Athens. Of the 49 blocks in the British Museum, at least 29 were still in place on the building when the British Ambassador arrived.

The frieze shows a procession that begins at the southwest corner of the building and moves toward the eastern end, the south frieze directly eastward, and the west frieze north to the northwest corner and then eastward along the northern wall. The west frieze shows a cavalry procession, mostly of young men with a few older men, clearly leaders, interspersed. After the frieze turns the corner toward the east, the members of the procession change from horsemen to bearers of holy water to leaders of the animals that will soon be sacrificed to Athena. On the east, older men await

View of Parthenon from southeast in 1801, watercolor by William Gell in the British Museum. Note the suspended platform under the 5th metope from the east on the southern side. Its purpose was to provide a base for drawing the metope, not for removing it. Elgin had not yet arrived in Athens.

Fig 5: *Metope 1 on the southern side of the Parthenon, still in place on the building (from P. Tournikiotis, ed., The Parthenon and its Impact in Modern Times [Athens 1994] 73, fig. 22).*

the procession. Just behind them, and also awaiting the procession, are seated figures who, if they stood, would show themselves to be much taller than the human figures. These are the Olympian deities. These gods and goddesses are in two groups. The one north of center faces north awaiting the procession. The last two of those gods toward the center are Athena and Hephaistos, and they recall the birth of the goddess seen a few feet away in the eastern pediment. The group south of center faces in the opposite direction. Between the two groups of gods are five human figures. There are two adults and three young females. The traditional interpretation of the frieze is that it portrays the procession of the Panathenaic festival. The "all-Athens" festival that took place every year, with an expanded program every fourth year, and that culminated on the Akropolis with sacrifices to Athena, for it was her day, and the presentation of the sacred peplos. This was a wool garment that was woven by daughters of aristocratic families over a nine-month period and was presented to Athena on her festival at the Panathenaia. It was woven like a tapestry and portrayed Athena's victory over a giant in the battle of the Gods and the Giants which was also portrayed in one of the metopes a few feet in front of this. In other words, this whole building, in its construction and in its decoration, was a celebration of Athena, and of Athens. The portrayal of a real human event, the Panathenaic procession, on a sacred building and in the company of the gods, was a statement of the position that the Athenians claimed for themselves. It was, and is, THE statement and THE symbol of what the Athenian century was all about.

There were three more products of that incredibly creative and decisively influential Athenian time. Sokrates, son of Sophroniskos, of Athens, was a toddler when Perikles began his political career, and in his early twenties when work on the Parthenon began. His father was a

stone mason and very likely was one of those Athenians whose zeal helped to finish the structure so quickly. Indeed, Sokrates himself may have worked with his father on the Parthenon. He certainly served in the army where he gained a reputation for courage. His death in 399 B.C. marks more clearly than any other event the end of the Athenian century. It is Sokrates' pupil from whom we learn of the master, and it is in his name that a whole school of philosophy continued throughout antiquity, a school he founded in a suburb of ancient Athens called the Akademy, ever since the name for the seat of highest intellectual accomplishment. Plato, son of Ariston of Athens, was born three years after the Parthenon was completed, probably within a few months of the death of Perikles. His most productive years were in the 4th century after the golden age of Athens, but he clearly was a product of the Athenian century. Thucydides, son of Oloros, of Athens, was in his teens when the Parthenon was started, and recorded many of the events of those years, and particularly of the Peloponnesian War which was ultimately the final arrogant statement of the Athenians' claim to superiority, and the end of any real superiority. But before that could happen, at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, the self-confident pride of the not-yet arrogant Athenians could appear justified. And so Thucydides records that Perikles delivered the public oration honoring the Athenian dead at the end of the first year of fighting in the Peloponnesian War. The year was 431 B.C., two years before Perikles would die of the Great Plague that swept through Athens and decimated the citizen body, and the place was the Kerameikos, the cemetery where private families had their plots, and where public heroes were honored with monuments. Perikles and his audience in the Kerameikos were, it should be emphasized, in direct visual contact with the Parthenon. It is important for us to have some feel for what he said. He makes a strong case for why

the symbol of his century needs to be reunited in its own land.

Perikles talks of the events of the year and of the city for which the dead fought. He explains: "...Our system of government does not copy the institutions of our neighbors. Rather, we are a model to others. Our constitution is called a democracy because power is in the hands not of a minority, but of the whole people. In private disputes, everyone is equal before the law; when it is a question of putting one person before another in positions of public responsibility, what counts is not membership in a particular class, but the ability which the man possesses. No one, so long as he has it in him to be of service to the state, is kept in political obscurity because of poverty. And, just as our political life is free and open, so is our day-to-day life in our relations with each other. We do not get into conflict with our neighbor if he enjoys himself in his own way, nor do we give him the kind of dark looks which, although they do no real harm, do hurt people's feelings. We are free and tolerant in our private lives; but in public affairs we keep to the law. Our love of beauty does not lead to extravagance; our love of the things of the mind does not make us soft. We regard wealth as something to be used properly, rather than something to boast about. As for poverty, no one need be ashamed to admit it; the shame is in accepting it and not taking steps to escape from it. And here in Athens each individual is interested not only in his own affairs, but in the affairs of the state as well; even those who are mostly occupied with their own business are extremely well-informed on general politics. This is a peculiarity of ours. We do not say that a man who takes no interest in politics is a man who minds his own business — we say that he has no business here at all. Taking everything together, then, I declare that our city is an education to Greece, and I declare that in my opinion each single one of our citizens . . . is able to show himself the rightful lord

and master of his own person, and to do this, moreover, with exceptional grace . . . And to show that this is no empty boast but a real tangible fact, you have only to consider the power which our city possesses and which has been won by those very qualities I have described. Athens, alone of the states we know, comes to her testing time in a greatness that surpasses what was imagined of her. Mighty indeed are the marks and monuments that we have left. Future ages will wonder at us, as the present age wonders at us now. We do not need the praises of a Homer . . . For everywhere we have left behind us everlasting memorials of good done to our friends, or of suffering inflicted on our enemies. This, then, is the kind of city for which these men, who could not bear the thought of losing her, nobly fought and nobly died. It is only natural that every one of us who survive them should be willing to undergo hardships in her service. And it was for this reason that I have spoken at such length about our city, because I wanted to make it clear that for us there is more at stake than there is for others who lack our advantages. These were men worthy of their city. We who remain behind may hope to be spared their fate, but we must resolve to keep the same daring spirit against the foe. You should fix your eyes everyday on the greatness of Athens, and should fall in love with her. When you realize her greatness, then reflect that what made her great was men with a spirit of adventure, men who knew their duty, men who were ashamed to fall below a certain standard. If they ever failed in an enterprise, they made up their minds that the city should, at least, not find their courage lacking, and they gave to her the best contribution they could. They gave their lives."

I wish that every American citizen were required to read the whole of Thucydides, and to think of our own country as we come to the end of our "American Century." Thucydides shows how Athenian power ultimately corrupted the Athenian Century. Perhaps we can learn from the

Athenians and not repeat the final corruption of that brilliant Century.

Certainly we can hope that in the future the symbol of our century, whether the Statue of Liberty [Fig. 6], or some other monument, fares better than the symbol of the Athenian Century has. But it may be that some nation in the future will look back at our American Century and think of itself as the "New America" and try to acquire that status by acquiring our symbol. Of course, they will not be the "New Americans," for such cultural imperialism is always based upon power and not upon real cultural accomplishment. It is the same feeling that I get every time I buy a book: somehow I acquire the knowledge that lies within its pages, and I would never admit to the casual visitor to my library that it contains books that I know only from their covers. The possession of the book allows me to think that I am learned, and the possession of the marbles of the Parthenon allows their possessor to think that he is more Athenian than those people who live at the foot of the Akropolis in Attika. We should not be surprised if, in the future, the monuments that are most representative of the American Century are torn away from their native settings [Fig. 7]. Those who come to possess such symbols of our current civilization will undoubtedly think of themselves as the "New Americans;" others will decide whether they who hold those symbols in isolation from their place of creation are, in fact, civilized.■

Fig 6: *The Statue of Liberty, lacking torch and head.*
(Courtesy of Stephen G. Miller)

Fig 7: *The British Museum with the interior frieze of the Parthenon and the torch of the Statue of Liberty. (Courtesy of Stephen G. Miller)*

Recent Research on the Parthenon Sculpture

Alexander Mantis

My purpose is not to approach the subject from the political or the legal, but from the archaeological and scientific point of view, and to point out three aspects concerning the treatment of the original sculptures existing on the building; secondly the possibilities opened up by our work in assembling a complete set of casts in Athens; and thirdly the achievements so far in finding and identifying more original sculpture fragments. All these activities show, I think, that the treatment of the Parthenon sculptures in Athens is not static, but on the contrary, active. The concern for the conservation of the sculptures remaining on the building and those in the Museum, the exhibition of the casts of the Parthenon sculptures in the Center for Acropolis Studies, and the extent of the research, are three aspects of the lively vigorous developments in Athens, making it increasingly clear that the entire sculptural ensemble should be brought together.

The replacement of original sculptures with cement copies: The first Parthenon sculptures to be taken away from the building and replaced by copies, after the Committee for the Restoration of the Acropolis Monuments started its activity in 1975, were the group of Kekrops and his daughter and the figure of Kallirhoe from the west pediment of the Parthenon. Both of them are displayed in the Acropolis Museum. Because of the extensive weathering the Kekrops is in a special vitrine supplied with azoton.

In the early 1980's a new step was taken by moving the

four Karyatids from the Erechtheion to the Acropolis Museum, and their replacement by cement copies. These sculptures are displayed in the Acropolis Museum in the same way as the Kekrops group. In 1988 the inner horse-heads of the Helios and Selene chariots on the east pediment were taken down, and in 1989 the fourteen east metopes of the Parthenon, (which had been deliberately mutilated by the early Christians) were replaced by copies, as well as the first three north metopes. The last operation was the dismounting of fourteen blocks of the west frieze of the Parthenon in 1992-93. The decision to replace the west frieze with cement copies has already been made.

The conservation work on the sculptures, before they were transferred to the Acropolis Museum include: *documentation* (mapping, taking photographs, recording); *cleaning of cracks; grouting of interior holes and cracks; attaching chips back onto fragments; replacement of the mortars* used in previous restoration works; *reinforcing the attachments* of the fragments with titanium pins; and *sealing the cracks* with mortars. The materials used are inorganic (white portland cement, calcium hydroxide, quartz sand, inorganic pigments) and compatible with the marble.[1]

The Cast Collection: During recent years I have been personally responsible for the exhibition of the casts of the Parthenon sculptures in the Center for Acropolis Studies. Today the collection can be considered as the richest collection of casts of the Parthenon in the entire world. Casts received from European museums, and making new casts of every little fragment found in the Acropolis area has created a great resource for research on Parthenon sculpture, making it a simple matter to test possibilities of joins and associations of fragments.

The extent of the research: The work of identifying and reassembling the Parthenon sculpture is part of a general

project of recording and studying the entire collection of Acropolis marbles, in order to identify fragments of architecture and sculpture and to build up more complete units to be exhibited in the new Acropolis Museum. A systematic search for fragments of the so-called lost central south metopes began in 1985, with the result that the amount of material that we have to work with has more than doubled. Intensive search not only in the Acropolis storerooms but also in the large marble dumps on the Acropolis plateau and on the Acropolis South Slope yielded a rich harvest which makes it possible now for the first time to attempt a partial reconstruction of certain metopes.

The architectural sculpture of the Parthenon is most difficult to understand in two places: the center of the east pediment and the central south metopes. In the case of the east pediment Pausanias tells us what the subject matter is, but the composition in the center has not been preserved. In the case of the south central metopes we have the reverse situation. The south metopes survived almost intact until 1674, when they were recorded in drawings by Jacques Carrey.[2] Thirteen years later, in 1687, Francesco Morosini's bombardment of the Acropolis reduced fifteen metopes of the south side to fragments and Carrey's drawings have proven indispensable to reconstruction. The well-preserved south metopes on either side represent a centauromachy, but the nine puzzling central metopes, hardest hit by the explosion, are the very ones where we have most need of the originals. Although it is clear from the drawings that the iconography of the central south metopes does not fit into the iconography of the centauromachy, the sketches do not furnish sufficient details to permit a secure interpretation of the subject matter.

In past years more than forty fragments have been assigned to the central south metopes, some fifteen of which have stood the test of time. Now, as a result of exploration and research during recent years, sufficient

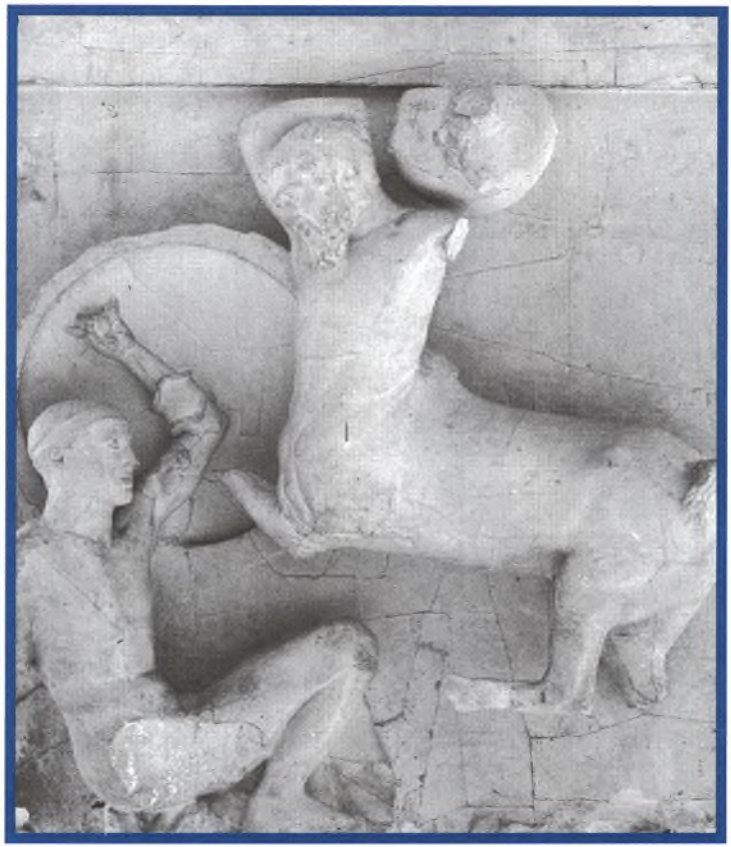
progress has been made in identifying fragments and partially reconstructing some of the figures to permit a rigorous iconographical analysis of these metopes. Our investigations have produced more than twenty additional fragments securely attributed to them. Indeed, some of these fragments were previously known but wrongly assigned. In some cases joins have been made between old and new fragments. In other cases associations could be established on the basis of agreement with the 1674 drawings, as well as weathering, scale, the logical continuation of folds and modeling, and the treatment of the back. Moreover, certain fragments have also been attributed to some of the preserved metopes of the centauromachy as well as to those that are lost.[3]

[Editor's Note: Alexander Mantis' presentation now focuses, in detail, on five of the central south metopes]:

South Metope 2: In 1922 the right hind leg of a centaur was identified as joined to a fragment in the British Museum.[4] In more recent years a fragment of a left elbow, also found on the Acropolis, has been found to belong to this centaur's left hand. This clears up a detail not shown in the Carrey drawing of 1674.

South Metope 4: A small fragment of a centaur's leg joins another fragment of the same leg, but since this part does *not* appear in Carrey's drawing; it must have been broken off before 1674 *[See photo opposite].*

South Metope 10: This is in the Louvre Museum, and there is *no* cast of it in Athens. Along with South Metope 6, it was the first metopes to be removed from the building in 1788 on orders from the ambassador, Choiseul-Gouffier. By the time the metope was taken down it was no longer preserved as it was shown in Carrey's drawing. The centaur had lost his head, right arm including part of the shoulder, right hind leg, and front forehoof. The Lapith woman had



Cast of the south metope 4 in Athens, with the left hind leg of the centaur completed with the fragment Acr. Mus. 748. The original metope is preserved in the British Museum and the heads of the figures in Copenhagen. (Courtesy of Alexandros Mantis)

lost her right forearm and her lower left leg and foot. The metope was restored in the Louvre by the sculptor Lange who first smoothed off the broken surfaces in order to make tight joins with his restorations, obviously made on the basis of the Carrey drawing. These restorations (in the meantime all removed), wrought irrevocable damage by destroying the original broken surfaces, so that it is now impossible to check whether or not a fragment joins. In spite of this disadvantage, a fragment in the storeroom of the Acropolis Museum belongs to south metope 10, on the evidence of Carrey's drawing. In the beginning of the century, this fragment was made up from two pieces and assigned to the Parthenon metopes. It is a right arm sharply bent at the elbow, with part of the shoulder blade, the muscular modeling and strong forms leaving no doubt that the arm belongs to a male. The heavy weathering (and corrosion) from rainwater on the outside surfaces make it certain that this fragment derives from a metope.[5] The scale, the pronounced muscular modeling and the configuration of the weathering showed that the fragment must come from a centaur. In the Carrey drawing the arm fragment is remarkably similar to the arm of the centaur in metope 10. Both in the drawing and on the actual fragment the arm is sharply bent and held down with the outer surface exposed to weathering. These coincidences are so striking as to leave no doubt concerning the ascription of the arm to the centaur of south metope 10.[6]

South Metope 11: This is the first in the series in the middle of the south side which was destroyed by the explosion; the history of the work done on this metope is a good example of archaeological research undertaken in order to reassemble the pieces of the destroyed south metopes. One after another fragments were assigned to South 11,[7] some of which have stood the test of time. However it is only after the recent research undertaken in the Acropolis storerooms, that this particular metope has

been satisfactorily reconstructed. The reconstruction has been made mainly of fragments which have been assigned before by the majority of scholars to other south metopes.

South Metope 16: A falling figure in metope 16, partially preserved in the British Museum,[8] has gained three fragments in Athens. One preserves part of a falling male figure which had not previously been associated with Parthenon sculpture. The factors that led the attribution are: comparison with the Carrey drawing, the workmanship of the underside indicating the extent of the figure, the distinctive weathering, the quality of the workmanship, and the scale. The attribution was confirmed when the Acropolis fragment made a join with the cast of the body, which is in London. Another fragment, which preserves a piece of drapery, had been known for a hundred years, and unanimously assigned to the pedimental sculpture. Nevertheless, it made a perfect join with the back of the previous fragment.[9] Now that the fragments have been joined, the falling figure of south metope 16 is one of the best-preserved figures of the destroyed central south metopes. The third fragment,[10] preserving part of a male left leg with part of the knee, was rediscovered in a storeroom of the Athens National Museum.[11] Metope 16 is an example of the diaspora undergone by the Parthenon metopes: the upper torso of the left-hand figure in the British Museum; the two added fragments in the Acropolis storeroom; the fragment of the left knee, transferred to the Acropolis from the National Museum; while the head of the standing figure is in the Vatican.■

Notes

[1] Information given by E. Papakonstantinou, responsible for the conservation works on the Akropolis monuments.

[2] Henri A. Omont, "Athènes au XVII siecle: Dessins des sculptures du Parthénon attribués à J. Carrey" (Paris 1898) pls. 2-8; Theodore Bowie and Diether Thimme, eds., "The Carrey Drawing of the Parthenon Sculptures" (Bloomington and London. 1971) 49-51.

[3] For earlier investigations, see the studies by Alexander Mantis: "Un Nouveau Fragment de la 10e Métope Sud du Parthénon" in Bullétin de Correspondance Héllénique (hereafter BCH) 110 (1986) pp. 619-624; "Neue Fragmente von Parthenonsculpturen" in Archaische und Klassische Griechische Plastik," ed. Helmut Kyrieleis (Mainz 1986), 2: 71-76, pls 102-105 (hereafter Mantis 1986 b); "Contribution à la Reconstitution de la 11e Métope Sud du Parthénon", BCH 111 (1987), 137-146; *"H APOKATASTASH MIAS VOREIAS* (Acr. 703+1094 and Acr. 3740)" in *AMHTOS: "TIMHTIKOS TOMOS GIA TON KATHEGETH MANOLH ANDRONIKO"*, ed. M. Tiberios and others (Thessaloniki, 1987), 473-482, pl. 95-98; "Neue Fragmente von Parthenon – metopen", Jdl. 102 (1987), 163-184 (hereafter Mantis 1987c); "Beitrage zur Wiederherstellung der Mittleren Südetopen des Parthenon", in "Festschrift fur Nikolaus Himmelmann, ed. H. V. Cain, H. Gabelmann, and D. Salzmann (Mainz, 1989), 109-114, pls. 18-19;

[4] A. H. Smith, "British Museum: The Sculptures of the Parthenon" (London, 1910), No. 298

[5] Stanley Casson, "Catalogue of the Akropolis Museum", vol. 2, "Sculpture and Architectural Fragments (Cambridge 1921), 83, 88

[6] Mantis, BCH 110, 1986, 619-624

[7] Casson, 1921, 99; Smith, 1910, 31, fig. 51; Mantis, BCH 1987, 137-146

[8] Smith 1910, No. 241

[9] Mantis 1989, 110, fig. 2, pl. 19, 1-2

[10] Smith, 1910, No. 324

[11] Georgios Despinis, "*PARTHENONEIA*" (Athens, 1982) No. 4, 7. cf. Mantis 1986 b. 73

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