

Imperialism, Art & Restitution

The Parthenon and the Elgin Marbles

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Given the aims of the conference, what I thought would be most useful, as the first speaker after the keynote address, would be to try to put the Elgin Marbles case into a broad context of appropriation. One reason why, as the agenda notes, the Marbles offer a paradigm case, is that we have two and a half thousand years of experience. Indeed, in the Parthenon, we have what is probably the most fully documented paradigm case in history of the interlocking links between art and imperialism.

I begin with two preliminary points. First, the appropriation of the Parthenon is part of the appropriation of Hellenism as a whole, a process that began in the ancient Hellenistic and Greco-Roman worlds, was resumed in the Western European tradition during the Renaissance, made significant scholarly, historical, archaeological, and scientific advances from the eighteenth century onwards, and is still continuing. Indeed, from the perspective of the present century, we can see that the export of parts of the building by Lord Elgin, the most drastic of all the past appropriations, came towards the peak of that long historical process, and that the central role of Hellenism in western culture and education began to go into relative decline not long after.

Second, in the long history of the Parthenon, it has been the viewers who had the visual experiences, who selected what was important to them in the act of viewing, who made the meanings, who internalised them, and who may also have acted upon them, both individually and collectively. Without viewers the Parthenon is an inert heap of marble, and viewers, fortunately, have never been the inert recipients of meanings recommended by others. To recover viewerly meanings is, of course, inherently extremely difficult and the evidence for some periods is sparse.¹ My approach is to attempt to situate changing viewerly responses within wider contexts, often unarticulated, that we can only know about from elsewhere. For this purpose, a prime resource are the narratives that have been advanced to legitimate the appropriations, and the physical and other means that the appropriators have used to try to persuade viewers to regulate their responses in accordance with these narratives. It is with these narratives that we should engage when we consider restitution.

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So let me begin. From the moment it was conceived in the fifth century BC, the Periclean Parthenon was a monument to imperialism. Like its predecessors, it asserted the identity of the people of Athens not only against non-Hellenes but against other Hellenic city states such as Sparta, Corinth, or Argos. But, since the cost of building was, to a large extent, financed by monetary contributions forcibly levied from the numerous other Hellenic cities under Athenian domination, the grandeur of the building emphasised that imperial meaning more obviously than either the temples of other Hellenic cities or the predecessor Parthenon in Athens. To Plato, who was deeply interested in the effects on minds of the viewing of works of art, the Periclean building programme was not only an extravagant waste of money on public display

¹ The same issues arise when we try to assess the impact and influence of printed writings where the role of readers has often been ignored or downplayed. For my investigation into how our view of past British mentalities is changed by shifting the main site of cultural formation from authors to readers, see *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge 2004)

but an example of how art can be used to corrupt the citizenry.² One fourth-century Athenian, the orator Isocrates, thought that the Parthenon had succeeded in its aim of celebrating and legitimating the Athenian empire. As he wrote: 'Pericles. . . so adorned the city with temples, monuments, and other objects of beauty that even today visitors who come to Athens think her worthy of ruling not only the Hellenes but all the world.'³ But for many fifth-century non-Athenians, we may confidently conjecture, the Parthenon was not a monument to the glories of contemporary Hellenic civilization, but a humiliating reminder of the recent assumption by Athens of a hegemony over their own cities.⁴ Certainly, once the Athenian empire was broken up, as it had been by the time of Isocrates, there was no rush among the formerly subject cities to re-establish it.

For many years it has been common to describe the Parthenon as a monument to democracy. The European Union, which is helping to finance the current conservation programme on the Acropolis, is following UNESCO and some United States government agencies in promoting the iconic image of the monument on official documents as a symbol of all that is best in the shared western democratic heritage. It is, of course, possible for democracy at home to coexist with empire abroad. It is true too that when the Periclean Parthenon was built, Athens had, briefly, a democratic form of government - although one confined to the free male citizens. In a famous passage Thucydides set out in the funeral oration of Pericles a statement of the ideals of the Athens of that time and contrasted them with those of other cities.⁵ But there is nothing symbolic of democracy about the iconography of the Parthenon itself, and the heavy work of quarrying, transporting, and building was done by slaves.⁶ The modern meaning, while not exactly untrue or unhistorical, exists in the minds of viewers and readers, and of those who have tried to influence them, including Pericles, not in the iconographic text of the monument. Indeed, uncomfortable though it may be to admit it, the iconography of the Parthenon lends itself more easily to appropriation by fascist ideologies than by democratic. In ancient mythology, the Hellenes were often presented as engaged in an ongoing struggle against uncivilized barbarians symbolically represented as giants, amazons, and half-human monsters, such as centaurs. The metopes of the Parthenon portray gruesome scenes of personal life and death combat between Hellenes and centaurs, an aestheticisation of inter-racial violence.

In discussing the state of the Hellenic world in the fifth century, Thucydides offered a fascinating aside. If, he says, the city of Sparta, which had no grand temples, should ever be abandoned, posterity would be reluctant to believe that it had once been so strong. If, however, Athens were to become a ruin, posterity would wrongly guess its power to have been twice what it actually was. Thucydides has been proved right.⁷ In recent centuries those who admired the Spartans, of whom there have been many, had no monuments round which to cluster their narratives - indeed the rejection

² *Gorgias* 518-519

³ *Antidosis* 234

⁴ The few references and allusions to the monument in surviving ancient writings are noted and commented upon by Savas Kondaratos, *The Parthenon as Cultural Ideal*, in *The Parthenon and its Impact in Modern Times* / general editor, Panayotis Tournikiotis (Athens : Melissa, 1994) 23-28

⁵ Book 2, 35-46

⁶ For a thoughtful series of essays that discuss the possible effects of democracy on Athenian art, see Deborah Boedeker and Kurt A. Raaflaub, editors, *Democracy, Empire, and the Arts in fifth-century Athens* (Harvard 1998)

⁷ Book 1, 10

of art by the Spartans was part of their appeal.⁸ Of the many types of political system that existed in the Hellenic world, empires, democracies, oligarchies, tyrants, enlightened despots, monarchies with hereditary military elites, and many others, the Parthenon by the sheer fact of its imposing continuing presence has tended to overwhelm the memory of cities other than Athens, centuries other than the fifth, and Hellenic political systems other than democracy.

Furthermore, later generations have actively cooperated in shaping the viewerly experience towards that selected memory. During the nineteenth century, for example, almost all the non-fifth century buildings that formerly stood on the Acropolis were removed. In order to promote the special claims of fifth century Athens on the modern viewer, the visible remains of two thousand years of other Athenian pasts were destroyed.

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The Parthenon was in almost continuous use as an ancient temple for nearly a thousand years. During that time a succession of non-Athenians, beginning with Alexander of Macedon, adopted the building to try to legitimate their claims to be the inheritors of classical Athens. To help with these appropriations, the Parthenon was architecturally altered to drive home the message that the city of Athens was now under external domination. New features were added to the building, but the main change was to construct monuments on the Acropolis, in some cases so close up against the Parthenon as to interpose themselves between the temple and its viewers.⁹ Although these architectural additions usually presented themselves as homage to the building, we can be confident that the experience of viewers, and the impact of the monument on their minds, was different from what it had been when it stood alone. But how did the viewers of later antiquity regard it? Was it a saddening reminder to the local Athenians of a great age lost and irretrievable, or a source of pride and inspiration to try to emulate it? Did the tourists who came from all over the multi-ethnic Greco-Roman world during these centuries accept the justificatory narrative of the Roman empire, gratefully agree that the Hellenic heritage of which they now had a share, was in safe hands, and feel strengthened in their loyalty to those under whose protection they lived?

Admiration for fifth century Athens has been so widespread in both the ancient and the modern worlds that it is useful to recall that many have disagreed. The Christians who took over control of the eastern Roman empire in the fourth century AD closed the academies that had been founded by Plato and Aristotle, an action that represented the completeness of the triumph of the incoming monologicistic theocracy over the pluralistic, enquiring, intellectual scepticism on which the achievement of classical Athens had been founded. The temple was converted into a church and the Virgin Athena became the Virgin Mary. In ancient times, when only priests normally entered the temple, the main view of the Parthenon for citizens was from the outside as they progressed on foot across the open spaces of the Acropolis. The design of the building, and especially of its external sculptural decoration, kept the eyes of viewers on the move. As far as the Christian Parthenon was concerned, by contrast, the main viewerly experience was when Athenians visited the building as worshippers. Those who entered the Parthenon, whose classical design was now increasingly obscured by other buildings, encountered three vaults of rising height drawing their eyes upwards to the Christian religious images. In order to appropriate and subvert the Parthenon,

⁸ See Elizabeth Rawson, *The Spartan Tradition in European Thought* (Oxford 1969)

⁹ The additions are described and in some cases illustrated by Manolis Korres, 'The Parthenon from Antiquity to the 19th Century', in *The Parthenon and its Impact in Modern Times* / general editor, Panayotis Tournikiotis (Melissa, Athens 1994) 138-140

the Christians changed the main view from mobile to static, from outside to inside.¹⁰

When the Turks conquered the Byzantine empire in the fifteenth century, they converted the church into a mosque and built a minaret that, by a deception of the eye, appeared to rise from the centre of the roof. But, although they made few architectural changes, the main view was again changed. During the Ottoman centuries few Greeks or visitors were permitted to enter the fortress. From the town of Athens, almost all that could be seen of the Parthenon was its minaret, the visual assertion of the supremacy of the successor empire. So powerful was the minaret as a symbol of oriental domination that, in contemporary western engravings, the Acropolis is sometimes wrongly shown with two minarets.

For the second thousand years of its existence, the Parthenon was presented not as a monument to classical Athens, let alone to democracy, but as a symbol of the completeness of the defeat of the values that classical Athens embodied. That was part of the general legitimating narrative of all the main successor empires that took over the building, the Byzantine Christians from the east, the Roman Catholic Frankish crusaders from the west, and the Moslems from the east.

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It was the Christian/Moslem Parthenon that the first wave of educated travellers from Western Europe discovered when they began to arrive in Athens in the late seventeenth century. Unlike their predecessors who were dependent on unreliable local traditions, they brought a full knowledge of the ancient Greek and Latin authors. Within a short time, they had retrieved a full and largely accurate understanding of the main architectural and artistic characteristics of the Periclean predecessor and of its religious and civic purposes. During the eighteenth century, as a result of the excellent, careful, and accurately-measured work by the second wave of archaeologists, architects, and artists, engravings of the recovered details of the fifth century Parthenon were diffused throughout the Europeanised world. Buildings modelled on the Parthenon, as mediated to architects by engravings, are to be found in many countries. Berlin by the early nineteenth century had become the Athens on the Spree. Edinburgh was the Athens of the North.¹¹

I think it is fair to say that Greek revival architecture both represented and presented the ideals of the European Enlightenment, scholarly, exact, scientific, humanist, questioning, international. Although, there was admiration for ancient Athenian art and architecture, the Enlightenment appropriation was not seen within the limiting contexts of art history or connoisseurship. The Enlightenment appropriators wanted to extend the boundaries of the recovery of Hellenism as a whole, of which ancient art was only part. It was the ideals of the ancient academies of Athens that they wished to promote, an attitude of mind, not just an architectural style.

In European countries, by the end of the eighteenth century, such an aura already attached to the building in a faraway country that only a handful of citizens had seen, that the Parthenon was only copied when the most dignified of public monuments were commissioned, such as the Valhalla in Bavaria and the Scottish National Monument. In the United States, by contrast, the Parthenon was routinely copied to give dignity to government and commercial buildings, and to large private plantation residences. With these later representations and adaptations, as with the Parthenon itself, we may be sure, a mismatch soon developed between the viewerly

¹⁰ See William St Clair and Robert Picken, 'The Parthenon in 1687: New Sources', in Michael Cosmopoulos, editor, *The Parthenon and its Sculptures* (Cambridge 2004) 166-195

¹¹ Architectural copies are discussed by Panayotis Tournikiotis, 'The Place of the Parthenon in the History and Theory of Modern Architecture', in Tournikiotis 201-257

expectations and experiences of those who first constructed them and those of successor generations. It seems unlikely, for example, that many present-day viewers of the plain replica of the Parthenon in Wall Street, New York, that is built on the site where George Washington took his oath as the first president of the United States, and long since dwarfed by banks that flaunt an ethos of global private capitalism, are strengthened in their adherence to the ideals of a well-informed, public-spirited, and participative citizenry.¹²

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Let me now turn to the physical removal and export abroad of portions of the Parthenon and to the justifications for these appropriations that have been offered to viewers. In 1687, in a war between a number of western countries and the Ottoman Turks, a shell struck the building, which was being used as a gunpowder store, and it has been a ruin ever since, although with some restoration. When the Venetian general, Morosini attempted to remove the large pedimental sculptures from the building to take home as a trophy, his ropes and tackles broke, and the largest and most visible surviving sculptures were shattered. Only a few small pieces left Athens at that time.

Morosini's bungled attempts to export sculptures from the Parthenon had little or nothing to do with admiration of the Hellenic heritage. He and his army were simply asserting their military power by taking war booty from a conquered land, to be displayed on their return just as the ancient Romans had taken ancient Greek art to Rome and Byzantium, and earlier western armies had plundered Byzantium. If Morosini had taken, and not just destroyed, parts of the Parthenon, his justificatory narrative would have been right of conquest. This episode is a useful reminder to those who wish to judge present day public policy on cultural property restitution issues in accordance with backward looking criteria on what was legal at the time. International law recognised a right of conquest at least until 1918, and that is the only legitimating narrative for the presence of some pieces held in museums in Britain and elsewhere, including the bronzes from Benin in present-day Nigeria taken in 1897.

Since the case of the Benin bronzes is often compared with that of the Elgin Marbles, it may be useful to publish the account of the circumstances of the acquisition and the justificatory narrative that was given at the time. It is useful in reminding us of the economic motives that drove, and still drives, the imperial project, although they were absent in the Elgin case

In 1896 an expedition, consisting of some 250 men, with presents and merchandise, left the British settlements on the coast, and endeavoured to advance towards Benin city. The expedition was conducted with courage and perseverance, but with the utmost rashness. Almost unarmed, neglecting all ordinary precautions, contrary to the advice of the neighbouring chiefs, and with the express prohibition of the King of Benin to advance, they marched straight into an ambush which had been prepared for them in the forest on each side of the road, and as their revolvers were locked up in their boxes at the time, they were massacred to a man with the exception of two, Captain Boisragon and Mr Locke, who, after suffering the utmost hardships, escaped to the British settlements on the coast to tell the tale.

Within five weeks after the occurrence, a punitive expedition entered Benin, on 18th January, 1897, and took the town. The king fled, but was afterwards brought back and made to humiliate himself before his conquerors, and his territory annexed to the British crown. The city was found in a terrible state of bloodshed and disorder, saturated with the blood of human sacrifices offered up to their Juju, or religious rites and customs, for which the place had long been recognised as the "city of blood."

¹² The present building was constructed between 1834 and 1842, the previous building having been demolished in 1812. See Charles J. Ziga, *New York Landmarks* (New York 1993) page 9

What may hereafter be the advantages to trade resulting from this expedition it is difficult to say, but the point of chief interest in connection with the subject of this paper was the discovery, mostly in the king's compound and the Juju houses, of numerous works of art in brass, bronze, and ivory, which, as before stated, were mentioned by the Dutchman, Van Nyendaeel, as having been constructed by the people of Benin in 1700.

These antiquities were brought away by members of the punitive expedition, and sold in London and elsewhere. Little or no account of them could be given by the natives, and as the expedition was as usual, unaccompanied by any scientific explorer charged with the duty of making inquiries upon matters of historic and antiquarian interest, no reliable information about them could be obtained. They were found buried and covered with blood, some of them having been used amongst the apparatus of their Juju sacrifices. A good collection of these antiquities, through the agency of Mr. Charles Read, F.S.A., has found its way into the British Museum; others no doubt have fallen into the hands of persons whose chief interest in them has been as relics of a sensational and bloody episode, but their real value consists in their representing a phase of art - and rather an advanced stage - of which there is no actual record, although we cannot be far wrong in attributing it to European influence, probably that of the Portuguese some time in the sixteenth century.¹³

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Let me now turn to Lord Elgin. From the beginning, before he even left Scotland, Elgin had developed a well-informed admiration for the Hellenic heritage and for Hellenic architecture in particular. His original purpose had been to continue the Enlightenment agenda of appropriation by imitation by employing artists and moulders to make accurate drawings and plaster casts so that western artists and architects would have reliable models on which to base western neo-hellenic art and architecture. It was only when, by a stroke of political fortune, Elgin found himself able to remove pieces of the building that he seized his moment. Over the next twenty years or so, his agents were able to remove, with a few important exceptions, all the best surviving sculptures that had previously formed part of the building. Incidentally, the claim made by supporters of the *status quo*, and repeated by James Cuno, that about half the surviving sculptures are in Athens – apparently an attempt to introduce some kind of legitimating justification by ‘partage’ into the discussion - is only true in an unimportant technical sense. Most of the pieces in Athens are so badly effaced as to be unrecognisable.

The 'Firman', the document upon which the claim that the Marbles were legally acquired by Lord Elgin ultimately rests, consists of a letter of four pages that was sent in May 1801 by the acting Grand Vizier, the second highest official in the Ottoman Empire, (temporarily in charge while the Grand Vizier was on campaign), to the Governor and Chief Justice of Athens. It is not technically a 'firman', a word used in the Ottoman empire to describe routine formal documents, such as passports, that carried the Sultan's insignia, but a specially prepared instruction of far higher authority.

Two versions of the firman were prepared by the Ottoman government, one in Turkish, and the other an official copy in Italian, the lingua franca of the Eastern Mediterranean. Both letters, the Turkish and the Italian versions, were taken by Philip Hunt, Elgin's secretary to Athens in 1801. The Italian version, that I found in the 1960s among Hunt's papers, is now in my possession. The Turkish version, which was delivered to the Ottoman addressees, is likely to have perished with the other Ottoman records in the Greek War of Independence, and no copy was found when I arranged for an official search in the archives in Istanbul.

David Rudenstine of the Cardozo Law School has argued that the Italian version of the Firman is some kind of forgery, rigged up by Elgin and Hunt to provide

¹³ A. P. R. Pitt Rivers, *Antique Works of Art from Benin, collected by Lieutenant-General Pitt Rivers, DCL, FRS, FSA* (printed privately 1900) Preface

legitimation. He puts great weight on the fact that the document is not signed and therefore, he claims, would not be accepted as legal proof in a modern court.¹⁴ However, the Italian version of the Firman is documented in detail in the historical record and its authenticity as an official Ottoman document, its provenance, and its pedigree are secure. As for the notion that the only documents that we should be willing to accept as evidence are originals personally signed, if we were to take that seriously, we would have no knowledge of any kind about ancient Hellas or indeed about most periods of the past.

It was by presenting the Firman to the Governor and the Military Governor in Athens that Hunt was able to persuade them to permit the removal of the sculptures from the Parthenon, although removals from the building does not appear to be allowed for by the wording. The key phrase at the end of the document appears to mean that Elgin could take away any pieces of stone he found in digging, not that he could take pieces of the building. Hunt, a representative of the British state with a representative of the central Ottoman government at his side, threatened to have the officials removed from their posts, or sent to the galleys, if they did not comply. The officials were at the same time given large monetary inducements. Since the third edition of my book, *Lord Elgin and the Marbles*, was published in 1998, I have been able to examine the financial accounts that are in the possession of the present Lord Elgin. Since they are written in a mixture of languages and currencies they are not easy to understand and have not been given any attention by previous researchers among the Elgin papers. But to me, as a former Treasury official, there is nothing like detailed financial accounts to reveal what is really going on.¹⁵

The Military Governor received payments in the first year alone equivalent to thirty five times his annual salary. The Governor got more, and even larger amounts, that do not appear in the accounts, were paid to officials in Constantinople. The Firman, in form a favour granted by the Sultan to the official representative of an ally, who happened to be interested in antiquities, was in practice a private mining concession to extract antiquities from the Acropolis of Athens. The paradigm point is this. No administrative or judicial system can be expected to withstand such a weight of political influence and money. This is imperialism in action, destroying not only the monuments but the local administrative and legal infrastructure. And there are plenty of lesser Elgins at work today bribing officials, breaking pieces from ancient buildings, encouraging destructive digging of archaeological sites, making collections of 'unprovenanced' antiquities, and destroying knowledge

Later, because of doubts about the legality of what had been done under the authority of the Firman, Elgin and later ambassadors obtained other firmans whose effect was to give an amnesty to those who might have broken the law and which, by permitting the export of Elgin's collection from Ottoman jurisdiction, implied that he was the legitimate owner. It is because of these later firmans, whose texts do not survive, but which also required the payment of huge inducements and the application of political pressure, that some lawyers, notably John Henry Merryman, have concluded that Elgin had good title to the collection and the right to sell it to the British state. Although, in my opinion, we should not judge present day policy by what may or may not have been legal long ago, I doubt whether the argument is decisive. Decisions by public officials to exceed their authority that are obtained by

¹⁴ David Rudenstine, 'Lord Elgin and the Ottomans: The Question of Permission' in *Cardozo Law Review*, 23, January 2002, page 452, and 'A Tale of Three Documents: Lord Elgin and the Missing Historic 1801 Ottoman Document' in *Cardozo Law Review*, 22, page 1865

¹⁵ Extracts published in William St Clair, 'The Elgin Marbles: Questions of Stewardship and Accountability' in *International Journal of Cultural Property*, (2) 1999

inducements are questionable under most systems of law, and I know of no lawyer who says that Ottoman law was exceptional.

I now move from the Firman to the legitimating narrative. From the moment that the first metope was cut out from the building, put on a cart, and loaded on a British warship, Elgin's Hellenism contained an inescapable contradiction. How could the violence that he had done to the monument be explained as the actions of a lover of Greek art? How could his removal of the best surviving sculptural pieces be defended as an act of homage? The answer was to present the export as a 'rescue'. During the quarter century before Elgin, the building had suffered greatly from an unprecedented inflow of western tourists and naval and military servicemen of many western countries. Eager to acquire even the smallest carved fragment as a souvenir, they had created a lively market for broken-off pieces that the Ottoman soldiers of the fortress were able to supply. Elgin's removals put a stop to the casual pillage and pilfering, that had done more damage in a few years than had occurred in the century since Morosini. To that extent, he was able to claim, with some justice, that he was performing an act of rescue. Or put another way, to illustrate the paradigm point for our conference, he had rescued them from the consequences of a free trade in antiquities encouraged by western demand in a state that had weak administrative and judicial institutions.

But how could the Elgin appropriation continue to be justified when, with the establishment not long afterwards of an effective modern Greek state, the dangers from which the exported pieces had been 'rescued' no longer existed in Athens? And those pieces that had been exported faced other risks, such as air pollution, and later aerial bombing and terrorism, that were higher in London than in Athens? The answer was to add a narrative of stewardship to that of rescue.

In developing and promoting the rescue and stewardship narrative in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the British appropriators of the Parthenon were following the justificatory narrative of the British empire, an institution that for most of its history struggled with similar contradictions. Like the lands of the overseas colonial empire, the legitimating narrative of the Marbles proclaimed, they had not been taken by force. They had been legitimately - and legally - acquired with the consent of the then rulers of the country. They had been saved from chaos and barbarism, and were being carefully looked after by an imperial protecting power that had their best interests at heart. I say that this was the legitimating narrative of the British empire, but you can find it being deployed by many other empires as well. The Athenians had a rescue narrative for their empire and were forever accusing the rescued cities of ingratitude when they did not accept it. They also had the beginnings of a stewardship narrative in the appointment of hellenotamiai, 'stewards for Hellas' of the centralised imperial treasury, although these stewards did not stop the revenues of the subject cities being misappropriated into public works in Athens. And of course present day American-led imperialism also deploys a rescue and stewardship narrative, for example to justify the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

The Elgin Marbles played a role in the legitimating narrative of empire. The presence in central London of the greatest works of art hitherto attained by the mind of man - as they were connoted by nineteenth century western artists, art historians, critics, and many others - helped to reinforce the claim that the British empire was essentially different from other empires, past and present. It was exceptional, benign, caring, intellectual, and artistic, founded on consent, scarcely an empire at all but a temporary trusteeship during which non-independent territories were being prepared for the equality of independence.

In the nineteenth century, the Parthenon in Athens and the Elgin Marbles in

London offered different and, to some extent reciprocal, meanings to different viewerships. In independent Greece, the monument was central to a long pursued national westernising agenda,¹⁶ Abroad it helped to reinforce western imperialising ideologies. The Elgin Marbles were shown not only divorced from their Athenian geographical, climatic, historical, religious, and architectural context, and displayed as 'works of art' in accordance with European post-romantic aesthetics, but incorporated into a metropolitan, 'universal' museum that, by the sheer extent and miscellaneity of its collections, celebrated British national and imperial success. And they were shown outside in.

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Let me now turn to another aspect of the Parthenon that is central to the tradition of appropriation by the west. Since the Renaissance, the main western European tradition of monumental sculpture has been marble, uniformly white. This tradition was not only practiced but was supported by a body of art historical and aesthetic theory. The essence of sculpture, wrote Winckelmann in the eighteenth century, is pure form, as distinct from painting which uses colour. Form is essentially different from colour. White is the essence of purity, the essence of classicism. In fact, by the late eighteenth century the Enlightenment archaeologists had discovered that the Periclean Parthenon and its sculptures had not been white marble but had been brightly painted, gilded, and heavily adorned and criss-crossed with metal attachments, including reins, bridles, weapons, and wreaths, also painted. These discoveries, which meant that the whole western understanding and practice of classicism had been wrong, and that was reconfirmed by innumerable ancient sculptures recovered from the earth by excavation, caused consternation among artists and their patrons all over Europe and North America. For if the Periclean artists had painted their statues, should not the moderns follow their example? That would make modern marble art look 'oriental' and in the case of female nude statues, pornographic? All through the nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries, many artists and archaeologists ignored or contested the truth of the archaeological discovery. Others were prepared to say that the ancients had simply shown bad taste in painting their statues and the sculptures from the Parthenon were more authentic with the colour gone.

The metal parts of the artistic composition, that contradicted the Winckelmann theory even more directly, were also ignored or explained away as of no consequence to modern viewers. So powerful is the persisting ideology of classicism-as-form that its influence is evident in even the most unlikely places. In the British Museum, for example, the explanatory gallery that was opened in 1998 – financed, incidentally, by a collector of mostly 'unprovenanced' antiquities - offers viewers reconstructions of how the Parthenon sculptures might have looked in ancient times. With the help of computers, these reconstructions restore the limbs and heads that are either in Athens or have been lost and add back the lost colour, but they omit the metal altogether. What, in the case of the Parthenon frieze, is a straightforward composition with a strong narrative line, is made incomprehensible to viewers.

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But there was a more sinister side to the cult of whiteness. In the nineteenth century Robert Knox, an Edinburgh anatomist, who also wrote about the Elgin Marbles, offered an apparently scientific anthropology of the different qualities of different

¹⁶ In addition to the usual sources that discuss this aspect, such as William St Clair, *Lord Elgin and the Marbles* (Oxford 3rd revised edition 1998), see the important study by Anastasia-Helen Yalouri, *Global fame, local claim: The Athenian Acropolis as an objectification of Greek identity* (Oxford: Berg 2000)

racism, the brave northerner, the cowardly Jew, the untrustworthy oriental and so on.¹⁷ Drawing on Knox, a false history was constructed that the ancient Hellenes were a white blue-eyed people closely related racially to the northern Anglo-Saxon and Germanic peoples who were their true successors. In the promulgation of this racist theory, the Elgin Marbles, and the white casts which were more often seen than the original marbles, played an explicit role. In an important recent study, *Chromophobia*, David Batchelor, an art historian and critic, notes that the fear of colour in the western art tradition is not a small or light matter. The fear, he shows historically, long predates Winckelmann and lies deep and unacknowledged in many attitudes. Including of course those of European and American imperialism. As Batchelor writes:

Chromophobia manifests itself in the many and varied attempts to purge colour from culture, to devalue colour, to diminish its significance, to deny its complexity. More specifically: this purging of colour is usually accomplished in one or two ways. In the first, colour is made to be the property of some 'foreign body' usually the feminine, the oriental, the primitive, the infantile, the vulgar, the queer or the pathological. In the second, colour is relegated to the realm of the superficial, the supplementary, the inessential or the cosmetic. In one, colour is regarded as alien and therefore dangerous; in the other, it is perceived merely as a secondary quality of experience, and thus unworthy of serious consideration. Colour is dangerous, or it is trivial, or it is both.¹⁸

In the light of subsequent events, the opening sequences of Leni Riefenstahl's film *Olympiade* should send a chill through every present-day viewer. The film opens with a vision of ancient Athens, with the deserted Parthenon emerging from the mists of time. White statues of ancient athletes and enticing women give way to the beautiful bodies of their modern white successors. We see the torch carried to Berlin, the nations marching in military formations past Hitler, some giving the Nazi salute, and we hear the approving roar of the crowd.

During the Nazi period, German classical scholars came forward to lend their professional support to the fascist ideologies of the day. Ernst Buschor, for example, in a book published in Germany during the war, picking up the Knox/Nazi racial narrative, described the ancient Greeks as a Nordic people who came from the North.¹⁹ He followed this with a little book, 'War in the age of the Parthenon' that was given to our soldiers and students. With its photographs of serene classical funerary monuments as well as scenes of fighting and death shown on vases and sculptures, the book offers encouragement and comfort to German soldiers by linking them to a great, and avowedly honourable, tradition of heroic war. The struggles between Hellenes and centaurs in the metopes of the Parthenon, although not said outright to be symbolic representations of the current war, are among the many scenes of violence recommended for aesthetic appreciation. In a preface, Buschor makes explicit the Nazi element of the appropriation by dedicating his book to the soldiers 'who have died for the Great Hellenic heritage on the borders of the west'.²⁰

During the Second World War, in proportion to its population, Greece suffered more than any occupied country, with the possible exception of Poland, with

¹⁷ See Robert Knox, *The Races of Mankind* (London 1850) 400, 596; *Great Artists and Great Anatomists, A Biographical and Philosophical Study* (London 1852) 137; *A Manual of Artistic Anatomy for the Use of Sculptors, Painters, and Amateurs* (London 1852) 34, 134, 172

¹⁸ David Batchelor, *Chromophobia* (London 2000) 22-23]

¹⁹ Ernst Buschor, *Hellas, Bilder zur Kultur des Griechentums herausgegeben von Hans von Schoenbeck und Wilhelm Kraiker*, (August Hopfer Verlag Burg B.M. 1943)

²⁰ Ernst Buschor, *Das Kriegertum der Parthenonzeit* (Munich 1943). 'die auf griechischem Boden und an anderen Rändern des Abendlandes für das Grosse Griechische Erbe fielen.'

plundering of its stores of food, starvation, deportation, atrocities, collective reprisals against whole towns, and the extirpation of the Jews of Thessalonika.²¹ In the Nazi appropriation of Hellenism, the ancient Greeks were of the noble west, the modern Greeks were of the despised east. In Greece itself, as far as the occupying armies were concerned, the heritage lay only in the stones. In 1948, an archaeological survey of the war damage found that the Parthenon and the other ancient Hellenic buildings had scarcely been scratched.²²

Meanwhile the Elgin Marbles in London had undergone a transformation that was also a result of the cult and ideology of whiteness. In 1928, the British Government accepted an offer from the millionaire art dealer, Sir Joseph, later Lord, Duveen, to finance the building of a new Elgin Gallery at the British Museum. Among the motives of the British Government in accepting Duveen's money that was known to be tainted, was a wish to consolidate the claim to be the legitimate stewards of the Marbles and of the heritage of which they were an embodiment. As Chamberlain, the Prime Minister, wrote privately to his sister on 26 September 1937, as Europe moved inexorably towards war, 'I think he [Duveen] has made sure that they [the Marbles] will never leave London but of course some day they may be bombed out of existence.'²³ The motives had parallels in the building of the imperial capital city of New Delhi that we can now see as an attempt to assert a confidence in the legitimacy and permanence of British rule in India that was already crumbling.²⁴

It was in 1937 and 1938, when Riefenstahl was editing her film for release, that another type of appropriation of the Parthenon was occurring in London. During these years, in response to the wishes of the Duveen, and encouraged by small bribes paid by his agents, the labourers of the British Museum scraped the surfaces of many of the sculptures with metal chisels and harsh abrasives in an effort to make them appear more white. The damage was done over a prolonged period without the knowledge of any of the curatorial staff. An inquiry under a judge, Lord Macmillan, concluded that 'The damage is obvious and cannot be exaggerated.'

As all archaeologists, historians, and art historians have long known, progress in understanding the ancient Hellenic past can proceed only as a result of careful attention to minute detail, and much progress has recently been made by new methods. The careful historical, archaeological, and scientific work done in recent decades on the site in Athens has added immeasurably to our understanding of the Parthenon and is continuing to do so. Some of us have been privileged to hear the initial results of the researches of Sarantis Symeonoglou, in which he believes he has identified a number of the artists of the Parthenon frieze, whom he calls Master A, Master B, and Master C. Symeonoglou reconstructs how the artist in charge, that is Pheidias, is likely to have designed and allocated the carving, making use of the relative strengths of the artists, one in drapery, another in horses, another in faces and so on. Symeonoglou's conclusions derive from months of minute study of the surfaces of the slabs of the Parthenon frieze that are in Athens.²⁵ Two points are relevant to our

²¹ See Mark Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece : the experience of occupation, 1941- 44* (New Haven; London : Yale University Press, 1993)

²² *Works of Art in Greece, the Greek Islands, and the Dodecanese: Losses and Survivals in the War* (London HMSO 1946)

²³ Quoted by St Clair 1999 from Chamberlain papers, NC 18/1/1022, University of Birmingham Library

²⁴ See, for example, Robert Grant Irving, *Indian summer. Lutyens, Baker, and imperial Delhi* (New Haven. London. Yale University Press 1981). The buildings include many features that emphasise the promise that India will soon become self-governing.

²⁵ Published in Michael Cosmopoulos, editor, *The Parthenon and its Sculptures* (Cambridge 2004)

paradigm here. First, genuine research can only be fully effective if all the surviving slabs can be seen together so that close comparisons can be made. Secondly, all research on the surfaces of many of the pieces from the Parthenon at present in London has been compromised.

The potential scale of the losses to knowledge inflicted by Duveen, and therefore of our and future generations' ability to understand and appreciate the Parthenon, have been graphically revealed by the recent work of Vincenz Brinckman and other German archaeologists and researchers in a work entitled *Bunte Götter Die Farbigkeit Antiker Skulptur*. They have shown how, by a study of the fine incisions left by the original artists on the architectural sculptures from the temple of Aphaia at Aegina, and above all by the pattern of surface erosion and patina affecting the differently coloured parts of the sculptures in different ways, that are still discoverable on the surfaces, they have been able to recover the original colour scheme of the whole pedimental composition.²⁶ They have recovered not just broad patches of blues, reds, yellows, and other colours used on the figures, but details of the elaborate coloured meander patterns of ornamentation on the hems of garments. It has long been known that the colour applied to ancient sculpture made it easier to see and understand, especially in the case of architectural sculptures such as those on the Parthenon, which had to be viewed from a distance by those moving about outside. What the German archaeologists have also demonstrated is that colour brings out details of the plasticity of ancient sculpture that the eye cannot otherwise appreciate. Far from form and colour being opposed, as the Winckelmann aesthetic chromophobic tradition wrongly assumed, they reinforce one another. Fortunately for our future understanding of the ancient Parthenon, the slabs of the west frieze that remained in Athens, although they have suffered severely in other ways since Elgin's time, have been found to retain much of their surfaces that reveal the extent of coloured surface layers. In this respect, the slabs in Athens that, until recently, were still on the building have turned out to be the best preserved.²⁷

From 1938 for sixty years, the authorities of the British Museum, in their desperation to maintain public confidence in the rescue and stewardship narrative, plunged into contradictions that deepened with every year. While claiming to be advancing scholarship, they impeded research and caused false information about ancient art to pass into circulation among archaeologists, art historians, and the public. While claiming to be the legitimate guardians of a monument to ancient Athenian democracy, the British Museum authorities repeatedly broke the laws, regulations, conventions, and standards of openness, accountability, contracts, audit, honesty, and conduct that are central to modern British democracy, and in some important respects they are continuing to do so.²⁸

On 1 June 1998, Mr Chris Smith, then the British Secretary of State for Culture, Media, and Sport, deployed the rescue and stewardship narrative for what

²⁶ *Bunte Götter, Die Farbigkeit Antiker Skulptur* (Munich 2003). Catalogue of an exhibition held at the Glyptothek München, 16 December 2003 -29 February 2004

²⁷ Results of recent work on the surfaces after they were taken down from the building reported to the 5th International Meeting for the Restoration of the Acropolis Monuments, summarised in *The Acropolis Restoration News*. July 2003, page 12

²⁸ Examples are noted in William St Clair, 'The Elgin Marbles: Questions of Stewardship and Accountability' in *International Journal of Cultural Property*, (2) 1999, and in 'The Damage to the Marbles: Trusteeship and Accountability at the British Museum,' *The Stakeholder*, journal of the Public Management Foundation, in a special supplement October 2001.

was to be the last time, in the House of Commons.²⁹ The narrative was repeated by outside supporters. The piece by Brian Sewell, the art critic of a London newspaper, did not disguise its ideological assumptions:

Athens has managed very well without the Marbles since Lord Elgin rescued them in the first quinquennium of the 19th century. The Turks, whose Ottoman Empire then embraced all Greece and most of the Balkans, paid them scant regard, occasionally knocking off their vulnerable part for sport or to oblige passing travellers with souvenirs, but the Greeks themselves did far worse damage by grinding them down for mortar. Witnessing this, Elgin felt it his duty to save them from further depredation. . . But who were these Greeks, early in the 19th century, and who are they now? They are not the Greeks of the ancient pre-Christian city societies that still capture the imaginations of all educated, romantic, oppressed and hopeful people who dream of democracy. They are not the Greeks whose language, literature and philosophies have formed the course of culture in the western world these past 2,000 years. . . . Ancient Greece, the mother of us all, subsided into a feeble, superstition-ridden, near-pagan agrarian society with not an idea in its head, its stock corrupted by Saracens, Sicilians, Normans, Bulgars, Venetians, Turks and any old Levantine, and I dare say that even the Scandinavian Varangians on their way to guard Byzantium planted a flaxen seed or two.³⁰

The late Auberon Waugh joined in the racial sneers, thinking it amusing to call the Greeks:

. . . some short-legged, hairy-bottomed foreigners, who have nothing whatever to do with the Ancient Athenians but who happen to occupy the space, being descended from Turkish invaders over the centuries.³¹

When the British Museum authorities were forced to admit both to the scale of the Duveen damage and to the attempted institutional cover-up, the rescue and stewardship narrative was revealed to have long been a sham. As in British India after the Amritsar massacre of 1919, it was not only the events themselves but the disingenuousness of the official responses, and the underlying attitudes that came to the surface, that convinced many people in Britain and elsewhere that the whole Elgin appropriation, whatever might have been the case in the past, was now invalid and that the Marbles must go back.

* * * * *

However, even before its final collapse, the rescue and stewardship narrative was giving way to another justification that may have sounded more convincing because it appeared to be securely rooted in a more modern ideology. And here too we have a paradigm for our conference. Among the most pervasive and powerful forces of the present day is a belief that the main purpose of an organisation is to please the consumer of the goods and services that the organisation provides. If the customer does not like the product, change the product. Duveen, in his picture-dealing business, secretly altered old master paintings to make them fit the preconceptions of potential buyers. If the public expects Greek sculpture to be white, Duveen's response was to make them white.

One of the features of the recent attempts to construct a new legitimating narrative for the Elgin Marbles has been the eagerness of museum curators to adopt the consumerist ideology and to press it upon the public. For example, the British

²⁹ '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.' *Parliamentary Report*, Commons, 1 June 1998.

³⁰ Brian Sewell, 'We must never lose OUR marbles' *Istoria List Archive*, 18 May 1998, published in the *London Evening Standard* shortly before.

³¹ *Daily Telegraph* 30 November 1999

Museum's appointed spokesman is on record as commending as 'a suitable last word on the affair' the following conclusion of a newspaper report 'I doubt if the average visitor or even the average art-lover would notice any change but that of colour. But then how many average visitors ever gave them more than a passing glance.' In 1999 the editor of *The Times*, who had been given a privileged official briefing, commented that 'The brutal truth is that the marbles almost certainly look better than they would have looked without the chisel and carborundum.' If the rescue and stewardship story has been quietly dropped, the 'all the better for a good scraping' argument is still alive and well. It can be found, for example, in the official history written by a former director that was prepared as part of the celebration of the Museum's anniversary in 2003.³²

For the consumerist attempt at legitimation too, scholars have stepped forward to offer their support. I quote from an argument offered by Mary Beard, an academic classicist, my colleague at Cambridge:

Perhaps we should not be thinking of the museum in terms of a stark contrast between academic and consumerist goals. The very idea of the museum is in a sense a trade-off, a difficult negotiation, between those two. Try replacing the word 'consumerist' with 'access' or 'outreach'.³³

If I have understood her correctly, Beard assumes that, because public museums in Britain are now encouraged to widen their appeal to groups who previously felt excluded and unwelcome, indeed 'outreach' is part of the conditions under which they receive their grant from public funds, the curators are faced with what she assumes is a dilemma. The curators, she implies, instead of – or maybe in addition to – using their skills to present and explain the strangeness of the past to viewers of all backgrounds, should be willing to change the appearance of the antiquities to make them more attractive to the hitherto excluded. They should, she implies, make Greek antiquities look more familiar by bringing them more into line with the expectations of the viewers, even if these expectations are based on misunderstandings and prejudices. The fact that it is the socially disadvantaged who are to be condescended to and misinformed in this way, offers an apparently liberal veneer to a consumerism that more educated viewers would not tolerate.

The consumerist ideology was also recommended by another British academic, Sir John Boardman, who now out-duveens Duveen. 'Cleaning for display in museums,' Boardman declares in discussing the pre-war whitening of the Parthenon sculptures in London, 'has attempted to restore them to something like their pristine white.' 'From an aesthetic point of view, monochrome sculpture is far easier to appreciate.' He says that he himself finds it 'easier to appreciate sculpture in a mainly monochrome state.' 'Weathered surface detracts from appreciation.' The duty invariably placed on the trustees of museums to preserve the collections entrusted to their care for the benefit of future generations and for future research, Boardman impatiently dismisses as 'the demands of rather self-indulgent archaeologists who are prone to put their own academic needs before all other.'³⁴

Again we see the persistence of long exploded archaeological errors in the unlikeliest places. At what stage, one has to ask again, were the Parthenon sculptures ever the 'pristine white' that Boardman admires and wishes to see offered to viewers?

³² D. M. Wilson, *The British Museum: A History* (London: British Museum Press 2002) page 243

³³ Mary Beard, "What are we all really talking about?", *The Art Newspaper* 99, January 2000, 18-19. While not repeating this argument, Beard does not withdraw from it in her book, *The Parthenon* (2002)

³⁴ John Boardman, 'The Elgin Marbles: Matters of Fact and Opinion', in the

He can only be referring to the moment during the building of the temple in the fifth century when the marble sculptors, on a change of shift, left the scaffolds with their drills and their chisels, and the painters and the metal workers arrived to take their place, with their brushes, their paint pots, and their boxes of metal. Apart from the absurdity of wishing to fake up for modern viewers the appearance of sculptures before they were even completed, and forcing the surviving fragments of ancient art to conform with ideological errors and prejudices about whiteness, there probably never was such a 'pristine' time. It is more likely that the marble carving, the marble painting, and the putting in place and painting of the metal features, all proceeded together.

What is significant – or a paradigm- about the articles by Beard and Boardman and is not their attitude to the whitening or to the question of which country should hold the pieces of the Parthenon at present in London. Their contention that museums can legitimately alter originals in order to make them easier to look at, that it is part of 'education' to protect the public from the intrinsic difficulty of understanding ancient art, and that a modern 'aesthetic' which is never free of ideology - sometimes unattractive and dangerous ideology - and that is forever changing, should override the duty to preserve, to explain, and to question by research, shows how far the consumerist ethos has taken hold even among those whom we might have expected to resist it.

* * * *

At the beginning of 2002, a different justification for keeping the Marbles in London was offered to the British people. Since then the authorities of the Museum have sought to revive the notion of a 'universal museum', in which all the arts of all the civilizations of the world can be seen together. In the British Museum, they say, you can see Greek art in context, alongside Egyptian, Assyrian, and Chinese art. To send back the Marbles to Greece, they say, would destroy the ability to compare differing styles of art.

The ideal of a universal museum was part of the aspiration of the European Enlightenment, carried into effect in many Western countries during the nineteenth century. The world's art, so the argument ran, should no longer be the private preserve of aristocracies. The general public too should be given some experience of the greatest artistic achievements of the ancient and modern worlds, the originals of which were mostly in private palaces or in galleries in faraway countries. This genuine attempt to widen access was done, in the case of sculptures, by plaster casts, in the case of paintings by having professional artists make excellent copies, engravings, and later photographs.³⁵

The recent attempt by eighteen museums to claim to be 'universal museums' has, however, little to do with the humanist ideals of the past, or to a desire to widen access. For a start, most of these museums are only interested in showing original pieces. Only a handful have even some antiquities from even some of the many civilisations that once existed. Even if you were to put all the collections of the eighteen together, they would still only offer a small and unrepresentative sample. And, as for the suggestion that the eighteen museums are the best context, it is hardly likely to appeal either to the mobile viewers who live in the developed west, or to the citizens of those and other countries that cannot afford to travel to them. But, in any case, the idea that a museum in a northern country is the best context in which to appreciate an ancient monument such as the Parthenon is absurd. As a friend of mine

³⁵ Examples noted by Susan Pearce and Ken Arnold, editors, *The Collector's voice. critical readings in the practice of collecting*, Vol 2. *Early voices* (Aldershot. Ashgate : c2000)

from Eastern Europe said when she heard this line being offered on television by the previous British Museum director. Is he saying I cannot appreciate the Alhambra by going to Spain to look at it because there are no Greek temples nearby? Is he suggesting that parts of the Alhambra should be broken off and sent to museums which have strong collections of Chinese art?

The published 'Declaration on the importance and value of universal museums' deserves to be looked at closely. The Declaration talks about 'the universal admiration for ancient civilizations [which is] so deeply rooted today'. Note the ritual repetition of the word 'universal'. But can the authors of the Declaration really believe that those who visit museums all 'admire' all the civilizations whose artefacts they see there? Not every ancient culture deserves to be 'admired' – very few in fact – nor is every broken pot worthy of the connoisseurship approach. The aim of the eighteen museums appears to be to create an autonomous 'aesthetic' realm where Greek antiquities, drastically decontextualised from their local, historical, and cultural contexts, are contrasted with museum objects from elsewhere. When the director of the British Museum, speaking of the proximity of the display rooms, declares that 'The connections between cultures are now more explorable. For instance between Egypt and Mexico', he must know that there were no connections of any kind between these two ancient civilisations and that any similarities in artistic style that visitors may detect are fortuitous.³⁶ Museum curators, it seems, instead of fulfilling what has long been regarded as their primary educational role of encouraging viewers to achieve a critical understanding of the complexity and variety of human experience, to appreciate the historic differences, and to question their assumptions, are now trying to legitimate the *status quo* that results from past imperialism by promoting the late Victorian post-romantic aesthetic ideology advocated by Ruskin and Pater. It is this ideology, incidentally, that seeks to separate the aesthetic from the historical, that encourages the trade in, and collecting of, 'unprovenanced' antiquities that is doing such damage to knowledge.

* * * *

The arguments from the Greek authorities and their many supporters for the return of those parts of the Parthenon that are at present abroad have also changed in recent years. The claim used to be couched in overtly national terms. 'We are the Greeks, the Marbles are ours, give them back'. I was never able to support it. But the present proposal is not like that. It makes no claim for ownership. It avoids all questions about legality and past rights and wrongs, and is not concerned with such counterfactuals as to what might have happened to the Marbles if Elgin had not taken them. Instead, it considers what is best from the perspective of our generation. And, seen that way, the proposal rightly puts the needs of the monument and of its viewers first, enabling the scattered fragments to be brought together and viewed and studied from the outside, in the changing natural light for which they were designed.

Personally, I should like to build other features on to the Greek government proposal. There is no need, for example, for the return to be simply a transfer from one museum management to another. The two governments and parliaments have the opportunity to devise new forms of trusteeship which are tailor-made to the needs of the monument in the 21st century. A new trusteeship could, for example, lay specific duties on the trustees with regard to conservation, display, access, record-keeping, needs of scholars, consultation, and accountability. Such a new form of trusteeship could draw on expertise and resources from other countries besides Greece who share in the Hellenic heritage, including international organisations. That would be real

³⁶ Interview with Neil MacGregor in *Art Newspaper* no 136 May 2003, page 18

universalism.

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Let me now offer some provisional conclusions. Over its long history the meanings attributed to the Parthenon by viewers and by those who have sought to influence viewers, have changed frequently. The Parthenon has been a monument both to various historic empires and to the colonial state, a celebration of classical Hellas and of its defeat, a symbol of Enlightenment and democracy but also of nationalism and fascism. The pieces from the monument taken abroad have been given different meanings from those left at the site. Nor did these changes only occur in the minds of different generations of viewers. The stones themselves have been altered to fit the political and ideological agendas of the appropriators. Copies and adaptations too, whether buildings, pictures, or casts, offered different meanings from those of the building from which they derived.

We can also note that during the centuries since the Parthenon was first studied by western antiquarians, we have seen a struggle between what we may call the scholarly, scientific, archaeology of the Enlightenment that makes a genuine effort to understand the past, and how it has come down to us in material form, in all their complexity, and the imputed meanings invented and advocated by various appropriators to meet the perceived political and ideological needs of a changing present. In that ongoing struggle, the record shows how frequently those who have the most knowledge, and therefore the greatest responsibility, have allowed themselves to be co-opted. Of one point we may be certain. Those who think that by possessing the stones of the Parthenon they possess the Hellenic, Enlightenment, or democratic heritages reveal how little they understand these ideals. The outcome is not certain. Meanwhile, as evidence about the wishes of citizens continues to mount, we can recall Pericles's words in which he contrasted his city with others where power was in the hands of the unelected few. 'We Athenians decide public questions for ourselves.'³⁷

³⁷ Book 2, xl, 1-4