

# Who Saved the Parthenon?

A New History of the Acropolis  
Before, During and After the  
Greek Revolution



WILLIAM ST CLAIR



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William St Clair, *Who Saved the Parthenon? A New History of the Acropolis Before, During and After the Greek Revolution*. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0136>

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ISBN Paperback: 9781783744619

ISBN Hardback: 9781783744626

ISBN Digital (PDF): 9781783744633

ISBN Digital ebook (epub): 9781783744640

ISBN Digital ebook (mobi): 9781783744657

ISBN XML: 9781800642997

DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0136

Cover image: Figure 2.7. 'View of the Acropolis from the banks of the Illysus, Sep<sup>r</sup> 1824.' Chromolithograph from a contemporary amateur picture. From: William Black, L.R.C.S.E., Surgeon, H.M.S. Chanticleer, *Narrative of Cruises in the Mediterranean in H.M.S. "Euryalus" and "Chanticleer" during the Greek War of Independence (1822–1826)* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1900), frontispiece. The chromolithograph was made by McLagan and Cumming of Edinburgh c.1900. Public domain.

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# 1. Why Another Book?

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Anyone who chooses to write about the Parthenon must expect to face the suspicion that, surely by now, there can be nothing much new to be said. As early as 1682, when the modern on-the-spot study of the building had scarcely begun, Sir George Wheler, in his *Journey into Greece*, admitted that he expected to be criticized for repeating what was already known, but since he was able to add to the pioneering account published in French in 1678: 'it would misbecome me to bury such Blessings in Oblivion.'<sup>1</sup>

In offering an anticipatory apologia Wheler was participating in a tradition that had been revived in western European countries in the 15<sup>th</sup> century CE from studies of the ancient Greek and Latin orators and of the ancient manuals on the art of persuasion. When, for example, in the year 155 CE, over a millennium and a half earlier, Publius Aelius Aristides composed a public speech in praise of Athens, he began by asking for the sympathy of his listeners as he faced difficult choices between what to include and what to leave out.<sup>2</sup> By the time of Aristides,

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- 1 Preface to Wheler, George, *A Journey into Greece, by George Wheler Esq; In Company of Dr Spon of Lyons* (London: W. Cademan, 1682). A longer and fuller justification was provided in the publisher's *Avertissement au lecteur* to the French translation of 1689 published in the Netherlands, *Voyage de Dalmatie, de Grèce et du Levant* (Antwerp: and sold in Paris: chez Daniel Horthemels, 1689). Spon's main work: Spon, Iacob, *Voyage d'Italie, de Dalmatie, de Grèce, et du Levant Fait aux années 1675 et 1676, par Iacob Spon, Docteur Medecin Aggregé à Lyon, et George Wheler, Gentilhomme Anglois* (Lyon: chez Antoine Cellier Fils, 1678), including the circumstances in which it was first written and published in the form that it was, is discussed in Chapter 7. I use the term 'Parthenon' as has been the convention since the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, to mean the building known more formally as the temple dedicated to Athena or, in its Latin version, to Minerva. A discussion of the ancient authors who use the term is included in Davison, Claire Cullen, with the collaboration of Brite Lundgreen, edited by Geoffrey B. Waywell, *Pheidias The Sculptures and Ancient Sources* (London: Institute of Classical Studies, three volumes, 2009), 565–70.
  - 2 Aelius Aristides, *Orations 1–2*, ed. and transl. by Michael Trapp (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Loeb, 2017), Panathenaic, prologue 3. See also Oliver, James Henry,

the tradition that speakers and authors presented themselves as reluctant was already more than five hundred years old, documentable back to the age of Pericles in the fifth century BCE when the design of the classical Parthenon was under discussion, by which time the tradition was already long established.<sup>3</sup>

In this book I explore the history of the Parthenon throughout the modern era to the present day, with special emphasis on the period before, during, and after the Greek War of Independence of 1821–1833 in which the Greeks and their allies sought to break free from the Ottoman Empire. I situate this pivotal period in Greek history, including the two sieges of Athens and the roles played by British diplomat Stratford Canning and Ottoman statesman Reschid Mehmed Pasha (Reşid Mehmed Pasha), within the longer life of the Parthenon. I am interested particularly, not simply in the history of the building itself, but the history of looking at the Parthenon, and the ways in which it has been made meaningful by, and to, different groups of people. A related volume, also released by Open Book Publishers, explores the history of the Parthenon in classical times.<sup>4</sup>

I thought when I first started that this study might provide a worked example of an ‘archaeology’ or a ‘genealogy’ of knowledge, as had been called for by Michel Foucault, and the historiographical presentations I have adopted have been as much counter-chronological as chronological. Foucault’s assumption that the layers of interpretation, ‘discursive events’, are ‘tell layers’, and that ‘any attempt to organize history and time is contingent on the observer’, is certainly a huge intellectual advance on what the authors of a book on the classical tradition call ‘the robust naiveté of earlier ages’. However Foucault’s recommendation that we ought to accept without reluctance that ‘any attempt to organize history and time is contingent on the observer’ may still risk giving insufficient weight to the fact that the trajectories of

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*The Civilizing Power: A Study of the Panathenaic Discourse of Aelius Aristides Against the Background of Literature and Cultural Conflict, with Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society Transactions, 58 (1), 1968), especially 92.

3 Isocrates, in *Panathenaicus*, 74 and 75, composed around 380 BCE, in the tradition of which Aristides follows, also claims to foresee that he will be criticized for departing from the established conventions.

4 *The Classical Parthenon: Recovering the Strangeness of the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0279>

consumption, of mediation, of interpretation, of the theories by which they were underpinned, and of the rhetoric within whose conventions the interpretations were justified do not form a sequence that coincides with chronological layering.<sup>5</sup> The history of looking at the Parthenon that has emerged from the present study is one where the past and the future as well as the present have themselves been fields of contestation, and where different ways of seeing can sometimes co-exist, morphing with only occasional resolution, for long periods of time. It is a history of conjunctures of consumption.

So, in the spirit of Wheler's apologia, what justifications do I offer for this new history? Leaving readers to discount for conventional politeness if they feel the need, I begin with a general disclaimer. The history of the Parthenon in the centuries before, during, and after the Greek War of Independence of 1821–1833, the central episode recounted in this book, is not a top-down revisiting of a body of historical evidence that is already known. It is derived bottom-up from the scrutiny of a vast amount of primary evidence in several languages, some printed, others in manuscript, whose testimony I bring to bear for the first time. In particular, I am able to make use of documentary evidence from the Ottoman side of the Revolution. Thanks to the work of Professor Edhem Eldem of the Boğaziçi University in Istanbul and of other Turkish-speaking scholars familiar with the Ottoman scripts and administrative processes, we now have a range of official documents from the archives of the Ottoman Government in Istanbul that are directly relevant to the role of the Parthenon in the Revolution, including a few written by the Ottoman Sultan Mahmoud II himself. Alongside these, I have been able to take account of many dozens of other primary Ottoman documents, governmental, military, and personal, that are known to me from contemporary copies and translations that were sent to London by ambassadors, almost none of which has previously been used, nor

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5 Quotations from Michael Silk, Ingo Gildenhard, and Rosemary Barrow, *The Classical Tradition: Art, Literature, Thought* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 15. Discussed also by Stewart, Andrew F., *Attalos, Athens, and the Akropolis, the Pergamene 'Little Barbarians' and their Roman and Renaissance Legacy with an Essay by Manolis Korres* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), 237–41, an example of what can be done. The approach has also been successfully applied in other specific cases, for example in works by Neer and Barringer.

apparently even known about, from the time they were first written until now.<sup>6</sup>

Throughout the book, I will use the term ‘archive’ to mean records systematically collected and kept at the time, some of which have been made available in printed form, but which mostly exist only as collections of papers—such as, for example, the archive of personal and public papers collected by Richard Church, the commander-in-chief of the Greek Revolutionary army. A recent tendency, again following the usage of Foucault, to speak of ‘the archive’ as a shorthand for contemporaneous documents of all kinds, including visual presentations, risks implying that the selection of materials that the modern author makes is amenable to theorization as a totality by the author applying traditional, that is mainly nineteenth-century, disciplinary and heuristic methods of literary and art criticism. This pays insufficient attention to the historic readers, viewers and consumers, and the possible effects on the minds of those actual men, women and children who encountered and consumed the texts. Such information is only obtainable, if at all, by quantified information on costs, prices, access, intellectual property and other components of the political economy of the production of texts, whether written or visual.

Besides written documents, I draw on the testimony of pictures, many not hitherto cited or reproduced, thus offering an opportunity for words and pictures, the two main modern ‘technologies of inscription’ to be given their appropriate weight, including especially the circumstances in which words are used to introduce, and often to commend, a picture (‘ecphrasis’), and pictures invented from readings of compositions in words that I will call ‘counter-ecphrasis,’ taking care, as with historical accounts in words, to separate those made at the time of the Revolution, of which there were only few composed locally, and almost none by participants, from the many that were produced subsequently for later viewerships. I also take account of events such as processions, ceremonies, and festivals, the parading of shackled prisoners, and public exhibitions of judicial killing and of body parts, ‘technologies of

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6 They are now held in the British National Archives at Kew. The circumstances within which the workaholic Stratford Canning wrote, and how he drove his staff to copy innumerable documents, are discussed in Chapter 19, along with a discussion of why, until now, they have been overlooked.



display and performance', that played a larger role in the attempts of the Ottoman leaderships to promote their objectives than technologies of inscription. Although such events consume themselves as they occur, much is recoverable from contemporary descriptions in words and pictures composed by onlookers and participants.<sup>7</sup> The present state of the Parthenon and of the pieces of the building taken elsewhere has sometimes allowed other evidence to be tested against the materiality of the stones as they have come down to us through the vicissitudes of two and a half millennia. Occasionally too, I draw on other direct evidence from the past, including the débris of war and human remains.<sup>8</sup>

Of course any sets of archives, however contemporaneous, however primary, however voluminous, and however widely defined, are inescapably products of the relationships embedded in their creation, selection, conservation, survival, and accessibility. However, the notion that evidence itself, being a function of the rhetorical and other aims of the producers, is inescapably unreliable, as some who study the ancient world suggest, is not a view I share. Nor, although our generation may accept that in writing about the past all lives should be accorded equal value, need we be drawn into the cultural relativism of what Werner Jaeger, champion of the unique value of ancient Hellenism, despairingly called 'a night in which all cats are grey.'<sup>9</sup>

Instead, I suggest, such considerations reinforce the need to treat words not as propositions stating facts, although they often do, but as speech acts by producers that aim to persuade consumers in a specific context; and to treat visual images as acts of invitation by their producers to their potential viewers, also in a specific context, to picture something in their imaginations, to adopt a meaning or range of meanings, and to act accordingly.

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7 The role of display and performance in understanding the decision to build the classical Parthenon and in how the building was put to use in ancient times is discussed in the companion volume *The Classical Parthenon*, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0279>.

8 To help readers to judge the validity of the claims made in the book I have devoted Chapter 4 to discussing the nature of the evidence that is now available.

9 Jaeger, Werner, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture, Translated from the German by Gilbert Highet* (New York: OUP, second edition, third printing, 1960), xxv.

## A ‘phantom limb’: the Ottoman Empire and the Revolution

Looking back, as the two-hundredth anniversary of the 1821 outbreak of the Greek Revolution has arrived, the differences from the ways in which it was understood and presented at the anniversary of 1921 are striking. The more the Revolution has been studied during the past century, the more it has become clear that to frame it in local terms as a nation’s struggle against cruel oriental occupiers, as was a main theme at that first centenary, understates its importance as a pivotal event in the whole eastern Mediterranean region with geopolitical repercussions far beyond.<sup>10</sup> Just to reiterate the main themes of the 1921 commemoration would be to ignore the huge body of primary evidence that can now be brought to bear that was not available then, and also risks crossing the border between trying to understand the Revolution in the terms within which it occurred at the time, and exploiting old, often ahistorical, narratives and visual presentations as a means of promoting contemporary aims.<sup>11</sup> Instead, without implying that the two main combatant parties to the Greek Revolution should be regarded

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10 Discussed by Clogg, Richard, ed., *The Struggle for Greek Independence* (London: Macmillan, 1973), pp. 1–40 and other essays in the volume; Pizaniias, Petros, ed., *The Greek Revolution of 1821: A European Event* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2011); Damaskos, Dimitris and Dimitris Plantzos, *A Singular Antiquity: Archaeology and Hellenic Identity in Twentieth-Century Greece*, edited by Dimitris Damaskos and Dimitris Plantzos (Athens: Benaki Museum, 2008); Kitromilides, Paschalis M., *Enlightenment and Revolution: The Making of Modern Greece* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2013); Hamilakis, Yannis, *The Nation and its Ruins: Antiquity, Archaeology, and National Imagination in Greece* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), especially pp. 74–78, with lists of predecessors; and Beaton, Roderick, ‘Introduction to the New Edition’ in St Clair, William, *That Greece Might Still be Free* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2009), pp. xiii–xx. For the attempt of the European powers, beginning with the Concert of Europe in 1815, to manage inter-state relationships as a system, and the assumptions that lay behind it, see Mazower, Mark, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea* (London: Allen Lane, 2012). What can be regarded as a late example of an earlier conceptualization that presents the history of Greece from a determinist Greek nationalist point of view as a series of wars of independence, events, treaties, and changes in frontiers, which is thoroughly researched as a chronicle but that offers little critique or discussion of the ideas and myths that drove the processes, and that shows insufficient concern for the peoples who were the receivers rather than the producers of policies, is Dakin, Douglas, *The Unification of Greece, 1770–1923* (London: Benn, 1972).

11 The notion of ‘presentism’ is discussed in the companion volume, *The Classical Parthenon: Recovering the Strangeness of the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0279>



as morally equivalent, or underplaying the well-attested general historical phenomenon that what people believe about the past may be as determinative of the course of events as what actually happened, I hope to integrate the history of the justificatory and other discourses into the history of events. As it happens, as though a warning from the past, the centenary celebration in 1921 was followed by the disastrous Greek invasion of Asia Minor which ended in 1922 that aimed to expand the geographical boundaries of the Greek nation-state to include populations of a diaspora whose 'ancestors' had left mainland Greece several millennia before.

The causes of the Greek Revolution and the motivations of the Greek Revolutionaries have been much studied, with attempts to fit them into wider intellectual movements and shifts that were occurring in the run-up to the violence. Yet the perspectives of the Ottoman Government, and how Ottoman assumptions, traditions, and motivations shaped how the story was later told, have, until recently, scarcely been studied. We can see that, in their own terms, the Ottomans had grounds to fear that an independent Greece within their remaining dominions, with the institutions of a hostile European nation state, including an army and a navy, may have led to a general unravelling of their form of government, and of the unique combinations of laws, customs, ideas, and institutions that constituted their identity.<sup>12</sup> And indeed, after Greece became independent in the 1830s, came national autonomy as a step towards independence for Serbia in 1830, for Bulgaria and Romania in the 1870s, for Albania in the 1910s. And, from the beginning, others, such as those who claimed to speak for the Circassians of the Crimea, had also put in their own, unsuccessful, demands for independence.<sup>13</sup> In the words of H. Şükrü Ilicak, even after Greece had gone, to the Ottoman leaderships it was a 'phantom limb' that still caused excruciating pain.<sup>14</sup>

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12 As was remarked by H. Şükrü Ilicak in 2011: 'While historians of several ex-Ottoman nationalities, especially the Serbs, Greeks and Romanians, have dealt with this period from the perspective of their national narratives, there is not a single monograph, or even a comprehensive article, examining the concomitant empire-wide events and developments.' Ilicak, H. Şükrü, *A Radical Rethinking of Empire: Ottoman State and Society during the Greek War of Independence 1821–1826*. PhD dissertation, Harvard University 14 September 2011, copy kindly provided by the author, along with much other advice for which I am most grateful.

13 As discussed in Chapter 18.

14 Ilicak, *A Radical Rethinking of Empire*, 14.

By the 1920s nationalism and its rhetoric had crossed into the formerly Ottoman territories of the Middle East where members of religious communities had previously inhabited the same geographical spaces without national borders. And it was then too that a large part of the remaining Ottoman Empire, now proudly calling itself 'Turkey', became a 'nation'. As Edhem Eldem, a scholar who has studied the Ottoman Empire and its language and institutions, has remarked, many writers on modern Turkey have until recently tended to present the Ottoman era as a long prelude to the emergence of the Turkish nation.<sup>15</sup> To use the term coined by the late Benedict Anderson, the Greek Revolution can, I suggest, be most usefully understood as a violent encounter between two forms of 'imagined community'.<sup>16</sup> It was therefore also an encounter between the claims made by the opposing parties to legitimate and justify their attitudes and their actions, both to outsiders and to themselves, including the deployment of imagined pasts and aspired-to futures, and often to claim that what occurred can be fitted into notions of inevitability, destiny, or Divine Providence.<sup>17</sup>

Besides the two main warring parties, others were deeply involved, notably the governments of the four major European powers (Britain, Prussia, Russia and Austria). When the 'great powers' opposing the

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15 Discussed by Edhem Eldem at the Conference 'The Topography of Ottoman Athens' held in Athens on 23–24 April 2015. Videocast at: <http://www.ascsa.edu.gr/index.php/News/newsDetails/videocast-the-topography-of-ottoman-athens.-archaeology-travel-symposium>

16 Anderson, Benedict R.O'G., *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London & New York: Verso, 1991). Anderson pointed out that nationalism is a modern phenomenon, although most people think that 'nations' are ancient and eternal, with distinctive characteristics that artificially set them apart from others. The phenomenon, he suggested, had only thrived when governments were able to utilize modern media to promote mythic pasts, especially the printing press, and the institutions of capitalism that arrived at much the same time. As he wrote of his own personal, unusually diverse, ancestry and upbringing in three continents, his generation were seldom troubled by questions of identity, although he saw that the imagined community of the 'nation' although normally presented as 'freedom', forced individuals such as himself and members of his family into artificial, mainly geographical, boxes. He also wrote of his extensive higher education in the ancient Greek and Roman classics as a 'bathing in two grand non-Christian civilizations' whose very statues were a standing reproach to the local and temporal provincialism of 1950s Britain. Summarized from the extensive literature on Anderson's work and influence and from his autobiography, Anderson, Benedict, *A Life Beyond Boundaries* (London: Verso, 2016).

17 Prominent in, for example, Chapters 17 and 23.

French Empire in the Napoleonic Wars saw Napoleon's power collapse in 1814, they started planning for the post-war world. The initial aim of the 'Concert of Europe' was to stamp out any resurgence of the political and other ideas that had led to the French Revolution and in so doing maintain peace across the continent. Although unanimity among the great powers was rare, they too constituted an imagined community. This community was sometimes called 'Europe,' a term that outsiders including the Ottoman Government and Greek Revolutionaries accepted and applied without irony, and sometimes, although with less general acceptance, [western] 'Christendom' or 'the civilized world.'

Although, in general, the policies of the Concert were led by Chancellor Metternich from Vienna, in the case of the Greek Revolution, much of the effort was undertaken by Britain, France, and Russia, all of whom had interests and ambitions in the eastern Mediterranean region, and armed forces with ability to intervene. The countries of western Europe also had populations who took a particularly lively interest, both through media at home and via feedback from those among their number who participated directly as military volunteers and as observers on the spot. As a result, the vast majority of contemporary eye-witness accounts of the Greek Revolution that we have were written not by local participants but by men and women from the west, many of whom were deeply imbued with admiration for what is often called the classical heritage, including a view of the ancient world upon which many of their own modern institutions drew authority. Heritage is, of course, a capacious term. David Lowenthal and others have shown from innumerable case studies how common it has been for the past to be appropriated, selected from, eviscerated, revised, embellished, amplified, its strangeness and otherness domesticated and made familiar, as well as deliberately falsified, to serve the ideological agendas of a succession of presents. The past is claimed as validation of current ideas, or blamed for the ills of the present, especially by those who wish to promote the exceptionalisms claimed by imagined communities. As Lowenthal remarked, 'history is for all, heritage is for us alone.'<sup>18</sup>

Recent quantified studies show that in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries successful revolutions were extremely rare; among those few, notably the Greek, that were successful, there is such a strong correlation

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18 Lowenthal 505, quoting predecessors who offered variations of the same thought.

between the extent of external help and eventual success that this link can be used as a predictor.<sup>19</sup> It is therefore, I suggest, also useful to think in terms of a fourth party to the conflict: the ancient Hellenes and in particular the classical Athenians, a civilization which, for westerners, was symbolized more than anything else by one building: the Parthenon.

## The Parthenon and its Meanings

As far as the role of the Parthenon in the Greek Revolution is concerned, taken together, the sheer quantity, richness and inclusiveness of the evidence has enabled us to recover a knowledge of events, of discourses, and of what went on behind the scenes, and how the factors interacted, that is as close to comprehensive as any researcher into an episode in the past, its antecedents and aftermaths, could ever wish to find.<sup>20</sup> However, to my surprise, I have unearthed new evidence that reveals an episode, to which the title ‘who saved the Parthenon’ refers, that has not hitherto been told—and that has implications both for how the history of the monument should be told and for illuminating larger questions about the uses of the built heritage.

The Parthenon was built in the 5th and 4th centuries BCE, or rather rebuilt with the help of materials from the so-called Pre-Parthenon.<sup>21</sup> Although the, by then, famous men and women of that time had been dead for over two thousand years, ever since interest in classical antiquity had revived in western European countries in the fifteenth century, their presence in western minds through the institutions of education and historical and political writings had been steadily growing. From the eighteenth century, the influence of the ancient Hellenes began also to be felt increasingly among the peoples who lived in the historic heartlands, including in Athens.

The presence of the ancients in the memory of western European countries encouraged men and women to found organisations that

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19 Noted, by, for example Grauer, R., and Tierney, D., ‘The Arsenal of Insurrection: Explaining Rising Support for Rebels’ in *Journal of Global Security Studies* 2 (1), 2017, 18–38.

20 To be discussed in Chapters 15 and 16. The practice of promoting the Parthenon as symbolic of the ‘civilized world’ in the late nineteenth and twentieth century is discussed in Chapter 22.

21 Discussed in *The Classical Parthenon*, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0279>. To avoid unnecessary repetition I use ‘Parthenon’ to refer to the classical-era building.

supplied the Revolutionary forces with armaments, money, and military expertise, and motivated over a thousand foreign volunteers, ‘philhellenes,’ to join the conflict on the Greek side. It was mainly philhellenism that enabled two large loans to be raised on the London money market for the Greek Revolutionary cause and for part of the proceeds to be devoted to building two modern warships in the United States. In the case of the Greek Revolution, it is therefore scarcely an exaggeration to suggest that the ancient Greeks participated in the Greek Revolution almost as actively as if they were able to deploy armies and navies and had their own ambassadors and spokespersons.

Two general observations underpin everything that follows. First, without viewers, the Acropolis of Athens, the frame within which the Parthenon is set both geographically and cognitively, is an inert accumulation of animal, vegetable, and mineral — and even these are categories invented and imputed by human observers. It is the man, woman, or child who looks at the Parthenon who makes the meanings, not the building as such as rhetorics of western romanticism often imply.<sup>22</sup> And, secondly, the transformation in the mind of the viewer from the physiological act of seeing to the psychological act of making meaning cannot occur unless the experience has been mediated. Any act of looking at the Parthenon, as established by modern neuro-scientific understanding of the nature of cognition, has required decisions on the part of the viewer, not always consciously or explicitly taken, about the organizing categories within which the seeing experience is to be understood.<sup>23</sup> Even those viewers about whom we know least, such as women and girls forcibly brought from distant and alien cultures and immured as wives or slaves, brought their own ways of making sense of their new experiences and surroundings, even if it is now hard to recover what their interpretative categories were, including whether they thought their situation was abnormal or unfair. The situation today, when all on-the-spot seeing has been prefigured, is only the most recent example of a process that, we can be confident, has occurred at all times in the past, including during the centuries when there were no expectation-setting pictures and few words.

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22 Discussed in Chapter 9.

23 The general insight by Bloch and others is discussed with reference to the ancient Greek myths by Buxton, Richard, *Imaginary Greece, the Contexts of Mythology* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994).

As for the advantages the Parthenon offers that make it especially suitable as a focal point for the present study, I note that, as an object of human interest, the Acropolis of Athens on which it stands constitutes its own visual frame. Some of the locations in and around Athens and beyond from which viewers have chosen to look, and from which artists have presented pictures—the ‘viewing stations,’ to revive the term employed by Adam Smith—were unchanged for centuries, and we can be confident that it was to influence the seeing experience of viewers standing on or moving in procession through these stations that the Parthenon was designed.<sup>24</sup> The Acropolis therefore matches the definitions of landscape pioneered by J.B. Jackson and W.G. Hoskins as ‘a portion of the earth’s surface that can be comprehended at a glance,’ but also as a text that is open to be read, and as a dynamic cultural process by which, by selective emphasis and exaggeration, human identities are constituted.<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, during the millennia since the site was first settled by the humans who arrived in Neolithic times, the Acropolis has probably always been an official and, until the nineteenth century, a military site. The succession of those who have exercised effective control, recognized against the legal norms of each epoch, including right of conquest, of formal treaty of surrender, and of heritable jurisdiction, can be traced and documented back, through a transfer of sovereignties, to ancient times.<sup>26</sup> The transfer of power continued more or less continuously until 10th of April 1833, the day when the Acropolis was handed over to the government of the recently established Greek nation state, and its modern history began.<sup>27</sup>

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24 Smith, Adam, ‘Of the Nature of that Imitation which takes place in what are called the Imitative Arts’, first published in 1795, available online in the Liberty Fund edition of the Glasgow edition. Examples of the use of the word in Greece include a letter from Hawkins to Gell, 23 February [no year given] in the British Library, BL Add MSS 50,135 f 74, and Wordsworth, *Greece*, 1839 edition, 34. The extent to which the classical Athenians designed the Parthenon so that it could be seen in certain special, as well as in normal circumstances, is discussed in *The Classical Parthenon*, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0279>.

25 Discussed in the Introduction to Robertson I. and Richards P., eds, *Studying Cultural Landscapes* (London: Arnold, 2003) and by Mitchell, W.J.T., *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994).

26 The classical Athenians themselves knew that the site had had a long history, and this was part of their world-view when they decided to build the classical Parthenon.

27 What I will call the ‘emergence from brutishness’ narrative is discussed in *The Classical Parthenon*, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0279>

We can therefore say with confidence that—apart from catastrophes, such as earthquakes, lightning strikes, and outbreaks of fire—every substantial change, whether the flattening of the summit by the earliest settlers, the clearance of the caves and the vegetation on the slopes, the building of temporary barriers and walls, the digging of pits and water cisterns, the design and the placement of fortifications, buildings, statues, and publicly-displayed inscriptions, has required the approval of the authorities then in control, including those whose occupation was short-lived. Decisions to preserve, to destroy, to adapt or re-use, to ignore, and leave to moulder, or to permit others to remove objects from the site, of which the most substantial in recent times was the collection made by agents of Lord Elgin, have also required the approval or acquiescence of those then in control.<sup>28</sup>

All those who have been in control of the Acropolis of Athens since it was first occupied, have had the viewer in mind, whether by building, destroying, or modifying, or by conserving, repairing, or restoring, with the hope, intention, and expectation that meanings made by these viewers would be acted upon. Some were short-term and of immediate relevance, such how the prospects might appear to a military commander considering whether to order an assault or a siege. However, a wish to encourage users to adopt a longer time horizon was among the explicit aims of those who built the modern Acropolis in the nineteenth century and at earlier epochs, as well as of those who planned and built the classical Parthenon and brought it into use in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE.<sup>29</sup>

Although the difficulties of recovering a history of looking at or ‘consuming’, the Parthenon are formidable, the building itself offers

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28 A note on the use of the phrase is included in Appendix A.

29 To be discussed, for the modern Acropolis, in Chapter 22, and, for the ancient, in the companion volume *The Classical Parthenon*, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0279>. The aim in the latter is to suggest, and to demonstrate the potential value of, evidenced ways of limiting the risks by reviving two ways of writing about the past that were used and respected, in ancient Greece, namely the Thucydidean speech and the Rhetorical Discourse. Produced in modular form so that the components of the two experiments can be critiqued, revised, or rejected without undermining the whole argument, the first experiment has, in my view, not only illuminated what is recoverable about the mentalities of the leaderships in classical Athens in new and surprising ways, but has enabled a solution to an old puzzle about the building, namely what story is displayed on the central slab of the east frieze, to be offered for consideration.



huge advantages to any researcher and his or her readers. With several thousand years of recorded experience, we are constantly reminded that the assumptions that our own age, as well as past generations, have brought to the study are only the current and temporary outcomes of a long, jagged series of earlier assumptions, of changing and co-existing genres, and of theories of what occurs in acts of cognition and how they are presented, which all demand to be given weight in the explanations. And, if we are rightly cautioned to regard the past as a foreign country where things are done differently, we can be sure that the future will not share the mainstream views of our generation or approve of all the decisions taken in our time.<sup>30</sup>

## The Structure of This Book

In the chapters that follow I set out a history of events within broad and long-term political and cultural contexts. The first nine chapters develop the themes with which this book is concerned while also offering necessary background to the events that took place during the Revolution, including life in Athens before the conflict, aspects of Ottoman rule, different encounters with the physical and imagined Parthenon, and the growing influence of philhellenism. The following twelve chapters deal with the events of the Revolution and its immediate aftermath, while the final four reflect on the changing role of the Parthenon in later history up until the present day. Finally, as previously mentioned, a companion volume is currently under preparation that will focus on the Parthenon in classical times.

This project involves a changing understanding of the past ('the then pasts') and of aspired-to futures both short-and long-term ('the then futures'). I also attempt throughout the study to re-enfranchise from the neglect of historiography some of the peoples of the past, including

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30 The observation 'The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there', the opening sentence of the novel, *The Go-Between*, by L.P. Hartley, first published in 1953, and made popular by the film of the same name, was alluded to in the title of one of the late David Lowenthal's pioneering studies of the modern notion of heritage, first published in 1985. Lowenthal, David, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: CUP, 1985). Republished as *The Past is a Foreign Country Revisited*, an updated edition 2015. I record here my thanks for many conversations with him over many years.

those, such as female slaves, whose voices are seldom recorded directly, and which, even when only recoverable from accounts of others, sometimes turn out to be different from what might have been expected.<sup>31</sup> Since, in an earlier book, *That Greece Might Still Be Free*, I paid insufficient attention to women and children, I have done what I can to help redress that imbalance.<sup>32</sup>

I also provide six appendices of transcribed primary documents, most never printed before, that, although a selection, will, I hope, help readers to judge the extent to which my account is faithful to the evidence, both existing and known to be lost. They are transcribed with minimal editing to give a sense of how they may have appeared at the time, and, as throughout the book, where direct quotation from other languages is required, a translation into English is provided.<sup>33</sup> My hope is to contribute to the ongoing collective enterprise of advancing knowledge of the history of the Parthenon both as a material building and as a producer of immaterial ideas that, when consumed by real people, had real-world consequences.

Although seeing is individual and dynamic, the mediations that condition expectations and choices about salience are usually made or offered by agents, such as political and religious leaders, authors, image-makers, museum managers, the authors of museum labels, and tourist guides. I could, for example, give the names of many men and women, authors and artists, whose sincere accounts of looking at or picturing the Parthenon conform so closely to the conventions of their imagined cultural constituency that it is now impossible to tell from their words and pictures alone whether they ever went to Athens and experienced what they describe and depict.<sup>34</sup> I will occasionally refer to mediations,

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31 For example, the young women enslaved after the fall of Missolonghi in 1826 who chose not to be liberated, as noted in Chapter 14, although they too were making speech acts with consequences, in the harsh situation in which they found themselves.

32 William St Clair, *That Greece Might Still Be Free: The Philhellenes in the War of Independence* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2008, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0001>). Cf. especially Chapter 14.

33 The texts are given in the languages in which they are at present only known to survive, as well as in English translation, as a possible aid to translating them back to their not-yet-found originals in Ottoman Turkish, as has been done with success by Professor Edhem Eldem in the case of the firman of 1821.

34 Many examples noted, in Chapters 9 and 23. The point was also central to the dispute between Spon and Guillet discussed in Chapter 7.

both verbal and visual, offered by authors and artists who present their work as taken from direct experience, but that were in fact created in the library or the studio at home.

Discussing the relationship of words with visual images, Socrates is reported by Plato to have remarked: 'Writings, Phaedrus, have a strange quality that resembles portraiture. Pictures stand like living things, but if you ask them any question about what they say, they preserve a solemn silence. And it is the same with written words. They seem to talk to you as if they had minds, but if you ask them anything about what they say, from a wish to understand them more fully, they go on telling you the same thing for ever.'<sup>35</sup> The Parthenon, our generation can readily agree, does not converse, but, with all respect to Socrates, we also know that it does not speak, let alone that it goes on telling the same story forever.

Contemporary neuroscience discusses the operation of visual cognitive processes in terms of 'saccades,' the eye movements that occur several times every second, and 'salience,' the value that the mind attaches to the visual stimuli received, and the reward it hopes to receive by targeting its gaze.<sup>36</sup> And the same cognitive processes have been discovered at work, to differing degrees, with the other human senses. It follows that, once we accept that cognition implies choice, and that the choices made are historically and culturally contingent, we need to historicize not only the spoken and visual discourses but the horizons of expectations brought to acts of seeing. In most cases these horizons included ideas that explicitly linked the then present with the past as it was then understood or presented, and with aspired-to futures, frequently by altering the visual landscape. At places, this study attempts to give weight to what is now sometimes called 'distributed cognition', that is defined in a recent book as a situation where 'the mind is spread out across brain, body, and the world.'<sup>37</sup> By reconstructing the irregular circles of contexts: some material, such as range of weapons;

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35 Author's translation from passage beginning at Plat. Phaedrus 275d.

36 Schütz, A.C., Trommershäuser, J., Gegenfurtner, K.R., 'Dynamic integration of information about salience and value for saccadic eye movements', in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 109 (19), 2012, 7547–52, doi: 10.1073/pnas.1115638109.

37 As discussed in Anderson, Cairns, and Sprevak (eds), *Distributed Cognition in Classical Antiquity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2019) from where the quotation comes in the Series Preface at vii. The approach is especially useful for trying to reconstruct the assumptions that underpinned the practices of classical Athens

some mental, such as genres of viewing; and some discursive, such as the rhetorical conventions within which the building has been culturally surrounded and presented, I hope to find ways of reconciling the messiness and contingency of the past as it was experienced, with more sustained trends and explanations that can only be discerned in longer retrospect.

What are likely to be regarded by some as the most surprising and disconcerting revelations about the Greek Revolution are set out in the central section of the book, in Chapters 17, 18, and 19, which derive from an astonishingly complete corpus of contemporaneous records relating to the active role of the Parthenon in the Greek Revolution and its aftermath that have been overlooked, despite being hidden in full view. These revelations require, in my view, previous answers to the question ‘Who saved the Parthenon?’ to be drastically revised, with implications for the ways that the history of the building and its detached pieces are presented. In the companion volume *The Classical Parthenon*<sup>38</sup> I turn to the Parthenon in ancient times, and by stripping away the layers of imputations that have been applied to the building since classical Athens and findings ways of coping with the systemic and asystemic losses of all but a tiny proportion of the evidence that once existed, I offer suggestion for new ways, or rather revived ancient ways, of recovering the strangeness.

Although it cannot include the many continuities, disruptions, and parallels that emerge in *Who Saved the Parthenon*, it has been drafted so as to be a self-standing volume. *The Classical Parthenon* includes two experiments in ways of lessening the risks of using anachronistic categories (‘the perils of presentism’) and the severe problems to which, in stark contrast to modern times, the patchy and unrepresentative nature of the ancient evidence gives rise.<sup>39</sup> I will suggest that using the longevity of the natural environment and of the discursive conventions enables us to recover more effectively the mentalities of the people of classical Athens and the considerations that prompted the building of the Parthenon, than when confining ourselves within the conventions of

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to be further discussed, with two worked experiments, in *The Classical Parthenon*, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0279>

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> As discussed in *ibid.*

modern academic disciplinary boundaries.<sup>40</sup> In the brief final chapter, I offer a few conclusions that arise from the general aim of re-enfranchising the viewers and users of the built and landscape heritage and those who advise them, and suggest an initial way forward by proposing how we might develop consumer genres to complement the producer genres that have been dominant in modern centuries.

Thanks to new forms of publication pioneered by Open Book Publishers, of which I am proud to be among the founders, I am able to include reproductions of more images than could have been made available before, and link to others that would have been prohibitively expensive to obtain and reproduce under current intellectual property regimes. The images I offer are, of course, themselves mediations from one material form to another, unavoidably changed to fit the format of a modern book and online screen. Since the modern convention of tidying up tends to reinforce romantic notions of visual images as ‘works of art’ detachable from the contexts in which they were encountered in their time, I have mostly left them unedited.<sup>41</sup> But although all attempts to offset anachronizing and iconizing tendencies involve losses, there are also benefits. The lost clear air of Athens that was uniquely well captured by the technology of aquatint engraving is now made even clearer when republished online illuminated by a computer screen. Images, such as the contemporary map in Chapter 6<sup>42</sup> and other densely packed images can be enlarged. And readers can zoom in to improve their appreciation of how visual technologies achieved their effects on viewers, such as the tiny lines, invisible to the eye, used by the makers of engravings on steel.

Wherever legally possible, the images will be uploaded on Wikimedia Commons under Creative Commons licenses, as a resource for future studies. I have also occasionally been able to refer to recent open access publications.<sup>43</sup> Further information is given about the provenance of each

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40 *Ibid.*

41 A few exceptions where, for example, I have intensified the contrast to offset fading are noted as they occur.

42 See Figure 6.6, Contemporary map illustrating the places principally involved in the Greek Revolution, p. 168.

43 Notably Taplin, Oliver, *Pots and Plays: Interactions Between Tragedy and Greek Vase-Painting of the Fourth Century B.C.* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2007), <http://www.getty.edu/publications/virtuallibrary/0892368071.html>, whose text and visual illustrations are especially relevant to a suggestion I make about the frieze in *The Classical Parthenon*, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0279>

figure, with other comments, in the places where they occur in the book. Except in a few cases, explicitly noted, where the copyright in the image is retained by the present owner, all images are out of copyright and reproduced here under a CC BY licence. Occasionally, to help readers imagine the Parthenon as it was encountered when the Acropolis was a green space teeming with wild birds, such as storks, as it was before the Revolution, and almost certainly also in ancient times, I have included links to modern sound recordings.<sup>44</sup>

The present study depends upon the work of innumerable others and on discussions with friends and colleagues over many years. It would not have been possible without the facilities afforded by many record offices, libraries, museums, galleries, and other institutions. This book could not have been attempted until recently as it also uses the evidence of rare printed books in several non-English languages that, although not held in even the largest deposit libraries in Britain, have been put online by institutions. It also relies on numerous other rare books reprinted in India and sold at affordable prices in recent times. Nor, finally, could it have been published in open access until relatively recently, thus enabling readers worldwide, including many who would have been excluded by older methods of academic publication, to engage with the text. This too is a looking forward as well as back.

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44 In Chapter 4.

